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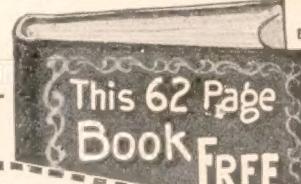
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VOLUME XXIV

NUMBER 1

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The Popular Magazine

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Twice-a-Month Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXIV.

APRIL 15, 1912.

No. 1.

At the End of the Cruise

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Lady and the Man For'ard," "An Incident of Alcatraz," Etc.

You haven't forgotten Mr. Cullen's story of "The Lady and the Man For'ard," which appeared in the first November number. Some of you wrote to us about it asking for more of the same sort. Here is a big novel of the navy by the same author—a corking story we think it. It comes as near being a perfect piece of realism as anything we have read. It's about a chief petty officer who is disgraced to the billet of a coal passer—from engineer's yeoman to bunker dog. He fancies that the assistant engineer is "hounding" him, and the inevitable fight ensues. The outcome isn't at all what the coal heaver expected—but there are some defeats that are more triumphant than victories.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

WELL, old bunker rat, d'ye think you'll ship over?" The fat paunch of Mulvey, the man-o'-war's cook, shook jellyishly under his guernsey, caked with the galley grease of many cruises, as he grinningly put the ancient, service-frazzled, derisive question to the begrimed coal heaver just off watch.

The question is always a jeer in the navy. Its equivalent in civil life would be to say to a man just emerged from jail: "Well, are you going to ask the judge to give you another thirty days?"

Danforth, the coal heaver just off watch, smiled as wanly as the wan day just beginning to break. Resting his elbows on the base of the galley window, he swayed with a weariness that four hot, choking hours of coal shovel-

ing in a ship's bunkers might easily impose upon the appearance of an Atlas or a Hercules in dungarees. He looked hollow-eyed, crumpled, dog-tired, dead-beat.

"Ship over, eh?" he said, deep in his dust-strangled throat, a sort of despairing bitterness in his tone. "I'd ship for a stoker's billet in the undermost pit of hell first!"

Mulvey, the ship's cook, filled a tin cup with steaming, hissing coffee, held out the cup to the coal heaver, whose bruised, bleeding, coal-caked hand was stretched out greedily and tremblingly for it.

"Well, I done me trick in them hell-hole bunkers, me first cruise, bo," said the ship's cook, grinning reminiscently. "You can have 'em. Never no more for this old flatfoot," luxuriously rubbing his paunch. "I don't mind swab-

bin' grease, but nix on them demitassey spoons you coal rasslers call shovels—oh, never no more o' that stuff!"

There was a gloatful note in his thick, fat laugh. The coal heaver appeared not to notice it, but gulped his almost-boiling black coffee as if it had been spring water. His ears had become accustomed to that gloatful note. The disrated man's ears must become used to that sound. It is the same on board ship as it is on land—the downed man must pay the price with the coin of patience.

"Shovelin' steam coal in a pitch-black hole ain't much like pushin' a pen over a engineer's log book in a nice, cozy, airy log room, hey, matey?" rumbled the ship's cook, glancing with an impaling shrewdness at the coal heaver out of his heavy-lidded little hippopotamus eyes.

It was a warm shot. The ship's cook was getting the range. The coal heaver squirmed, skipped a few sips from the tin cup of coffee, and his black-rimmed eyes spat a spark or two. The barb of his disratement, only a few weeks before, from his comfortable billet to this dog's disgrace and dog's work, still quivered in his flesh and spirit. From chief petty officer to coal passer, from engineer's yeoman to bunker dog; this had been his fall—a Luciferian fall without the compensation of the Luciferian dignity! And he had deserved it; it had been coming to him—long coming. Even in his bitterness, Danforth never sought to deny that to anybody, least of all to himself.

"You don't hear me roaring about it, do you?" the coal heaver coolly asked the ship's cook, feebly debonair.

"N-no, I can't say as you're roarin' none, matey," said the cook. "But you're burnin' to a grate clinker inside o' you, bo—any beach comber soused up to the ears with vino could see that! Hey, buddy? Sizzlin' inside o' you, ain't you, when you think o' that nice, slick log room, with the desk, and the blottin' pads, and the deck all shiny with shellac, and then when you compare all o' that tidy spick-and-spanness with them murderin', choky, gaspy, stranglin'

bunkers where you rassle one o' them demitassey spoons known as shovels four hours on and four off, and—"

"Don't take it to heart so, shipmate—it might strike in and clog your works," said the coal heaver, with a forced smile, cutting in upon the cook's malign morning mood, and he moved from the galley window over to the break of the port gangway to finish his coffee and to roll a cigarette to go with it.

It was a tremulous, vibratory dawn, all sky and sea expectant. Along the rim of the eastern horizon lay a blurred blanket of black cloud, the edge thereof just beginning to show, as upon the border of an imperial toga, first purple, then coppery, then golden tints of the still unrisen sun. The ship rode the long, uncrested swell as slumberously as a forsaken derelict. It was a full half hour before the piping of all hands for the day's routine.

Danforth, glancing aft in the dimness as he moved wearily toward the port gangway, saw the huddled figure of the marine sentry, who should have been trudging the deck at the ship's waist, sprawled atop of the grating of the for'ard engine-room hatch; a perilous business for a sea soldier, in case the officer of the deck should catch him thus dozing on post. The coal heaver shambled aft, and shook the sentry.

"Come out of it, you pipe-claying idiot," said Danforth, in the marine's ear, speaking almost in a whisper. "What are you baiting your hook for—a couple of years in the Mare Island brig for sleeping on post, not to mention a boottail?"

The marine sentry, a moon-faced youth, sat up on the grating, a crumpled-looking man-o'-war soldier, rubbed his eyes, and stared at the coal heaver. Then he grinned guiltily.

"Thanks, matey," he said, standing up and tugging at his white belt. He peered gratefully into the coal heaver's face. "You ain't no bad guy, Danforth. Much obliged to you—I sure am. Some white, wakin' me up. Most of these bluejacket guys'd be glad to see a sea soldier snagged for sleepin' on watch." He paused and called after the coal

heaver, who was beginning to trudge toward the break of the port gangway: "Say, Danforth, I'm sorry they broke you. I ain't glad, like some of the rest of 'em was. I'm sorry. I wisht you could ha' kep' your good billet till the end of your cruise."

A decent word! Danforth felt a bit of a lump in his throat. It was the first sympathetic utterance from any of his shipmates since his disratement.

Danforth looked himself over, literally and figuratively, standing at the break of the gangway, seeing, but scarcely sensing, the crimson ripples of the sunrise sea.

In the highly polished breech of the big gun just abaft the gangway where he lounged, his eye caught a partial reflection of his coal heaver's exterior: a tall, long-armed, sinewy but rather sparely built man of thirty or less, now slightly stooped at the shoulders from utter weariness, swaddled in baggy, shapeless dungarees, the original blue of which only showed in rare spots where it was not grimed with bunker dust; a bluejacket's cap, minus the gasket, perched with a grim and unstudied jauntiness over his left ear, with the ends of the dirty cap ribbon fluttering over his left eye; a beardless face, albeit covered with black stubble of three days' growth—a face of good contour and no great strength, still possessing lines of a certain ineradicable delicacy showing through the splotches of bunker black.

Sardonically viewing this partial reflection in the great gun's breech, Danforth, remembering sundry and divers photographs of himself in the purple and fine linen of his civilian existence, caught himself grinning with a whimsical bitterness. Here, at last, he had reached his level: a dirty bunker dog at a gangway, gulping coffee out of tin after a four-hour watch in the black belly of a man-o'-war, and it had been coming to him—long coming!

Three weeks before he had been a trim, brass-buttoned chief petty officer, lounging in a log room aft, with the engineer's log to keep, a couple of hours of daily clerical work to do, a few engi-

neers' stores—oil and waste—to dish out to "the black gang" below through the hands of an engineer's storekeeper, and all of the rest of his time to read, to lounge on deck and enjoy the cloud effects, to take sunset or sunrise liberty in Chinese and Japanese ports when he chose—this all sacrificed, tossed to the winds, for the sake of a saki drunk that found him, at its finish, disrated to the billet of a coal heaver!

The cruiser was three days out of Yokohama, for San Francisco and the dry dock at Mare Island, with the homeward-bound pennant trailing over the mizzen rail—and here, his three-year cruise all accomplished barring the "butt" of a few months, he was on his way home, not as a spick-and-span chief petty officer, the rating he had held since he had shipped, but as a grimy swab in dungarees, a "busted brass buttons," and therefore "natural meat" for the jeers of the ship's company for'ard.

On his way home to the pretty little wife he had not seen for nearly three years, and to the baby he had *never* seen! Home? He had no home. His wife was living with her mother, the landlady of a San Francisco boarding house. But he would make a home; he had the money on the ship's books to do it: *make* a home for the pretty, patient wife and the little girl he had never seen!

"Through with that tin cup, coal mauler?" Mulvey, the ship's cook, who had waddled out of the galley, inquired at his elbow. "Whatcha doin'? Thinkin' it over? Well, they ain't no nutriment in that—thinkin' things over, I mean. Not none! O' course, I can understand how you feel, matey. After a man's worn the buttons, and a peaked cap with a shiny device over it, it sure must be mortal hard to slide into a suit o' gummy dungarees and crawl, four hours on and four off, through them blasted choky bunkers, dishin' coal into a old bucket—"

"You're a dirty sort of a sea scut, Mulvey, aren't you?" Danforth said to the ship's cook, as quietly as if he had been complimenting the morning crack-er hash simmering in the galley stove.

But his bruised hands were clenched, and there was subdued wrath slumbering in his eyes as he moved away.

As Danforth stepped from the main deck to make for the shower baths of "the black gang"—engineers' force—below, the gangway bo'sun's mate's shrill pipe summoned all hands from their hammocks, and, like a sudden tumult in the streets of a city, the ship broke into boisterous life; a ship's company of a steaming man-o'-war greeting the first call of morning with laughs, growls, curses, sneers, horseplay howls, as they pitched out of their hammocks, and, even before dressing, began to lash the sleeping bags for stowing in the hammock nettings.

Unlovely sights, unlovely sounds—Danforth had not got used to them, still loathed them. Before his disgratement there had been no need for him to mingle with the hammock swingers for'ard, for he had slept upon a folding bunk in the engineers' log room, and had turned out, not with the hands, but at leisure. Now, as he shambled precariously through the berth-deck alleys, he was rammed at every step by black-ganggers and deck hands who swung below, hustling their lashed hammocks to the main-deck nettings.

Swaying and spluttering under one of the cold sea-water showers was red-haired, blear-eyed Oiler Burke, something more than middling drunk, and now trying the impact of cold streams to get at least presentably sober before going on watch with his oil can in the clutter of frenzied machinery.

"Ahoy, there, yeh son of a 'scouse cook," Burke addressed Danforth, with alcoholic cordiality. "Yeh look doubled up—no likee the bunker job, hey? How'd a slug o' booze go? I got a couple o' 'dogs' cached in one o' the for'ard engine-room bilges. Stick to me, buddy, and I'll pickle yeh up a hull lot—yeh look like yeh need it."

"Much obliged, Burke," replied Danforth, beginning to strip for the shower, "but I'm off the stuff."

The swaying oiler's streaming face creased into a drunken, sardonic grin.

"Off it, hey?" he blurted thickly.

"For how long? Till we pull Honolulu to coal ship?"

"For the rest of my cruise on this planet, I hope," said the coal heaver, offhandedly enough, but he brought his teeth together with a click as he said it.

The oiler, steadyng himself against a dripping bulkhead while he dried himself with a rough towel, laughed raucously.

"That's an old song, matey," he jeered. "I wish I had a yen for every black-ganger I've heard sing that—"

Danforth said nothing as the drunken oiler rambled on. The drink subject had become a cankerous topic with him. Drink had clouded his life ashore. It had been the direct occasion of the recklessness which caused him to ship in the navy. An expert stenographer, a court reporter in San Francisco, his periodical spreeing had thrust him out of good estimation and trust, finally into the loss of position after position.

He had kept it up, on shore liberties in the ports of Japan and China; often, after such liberties, he had been barely able to report "clean and sober" to the officer of the deck on returning aboard, and his work as engineer's yeoman—important work, especially the keeping of the engineer's log book—had suffered after these whirls ashore.

Sent ashore at Nagasaki, Japan, three weeks before, to weigh the coal that his ship was taking on board for the run to Yokohama, he had begun "nibbling" on saki, that extraordinarily insidious and deceiving Japanese distillation of rice. Saki is not a fluid to be trifled with by sailors or civilians of the Occident who imagine that they have their appetite for liquor under control. Danforth's experimentation with the deceiving saki had ended in a debauch; he had disappeared from the coal shed for three days, one of the machinists having been sent ashore to weigh the coal.

A sergeant of marines and a file of the marine guard, on provost duty to round up the ship's derelicts before the up-anchoring for Yokohama, had sprung the saki-impregnated yeoman in a tea house, listening besottedly to geishas accompanying their squeaky

voices with music of koto and samisen. On being brought on board ship, Danforth, reaching the log room, had been confronted by the keen-eyed assistant engineer, Mr. Arkwright.

"Sleep off this drunk, my man, and then heave to and get this log written up," the assistant had said, decently enough. "We'll try to save you your billet, but you deserve to lose your 'crow,'"—"crow" being the ship-of-war slang, fore and aft, for the eagle rating badge worn on the watch arms of petty officers.

Fair spoken enough on the assistant's part, but Danforth, filled with saki-generated rage, sore at the sight of the assistant's spick-and-span sobriety, had raised a hand to strike his superior officer. He could have got three years in a naval prison and dishonorable discharge from the service for that. But the assistant, pinning the yeoman's arms to his side, had only said crisply: "You're a low ingrate, Danforth, but nobody has seen this, and so your only punishment will be that you'll be broke."

On the following morning, Danforth found himself in dungarees, shoveling coal in the bunkers. A fireman who wrote a fair hand had been given his yeoman's billet, a fine jump for a blackganger who had put in two cruises handling a slice bar in the raging heat of furnace rooms. Danforth hated with an unreasoning hatred the assistant engineer who had justly broken him. But that hatred did not debar him from making up his mind that he was forever through with the drink.

"Oh, here you are, Danforth," said Mr. Arkwright, the assistant engineer, appearing in the doorway of the shower room. Danforth's wet face clouded at the sight of him. "Stand by, my man, when you go on watch again, to help scale the starboard after boiler. It's a dirty mess."

Danforth was due for an "Aye, aye, sir," in response to that command. It was not forthcoming. He stepped in his nakedness from beneath the shower, and stood mute. The assistant shot a sharp glance at the coal heaver.

"Well?" chopped the officer, waiting.

Still the coal heaver, his unreasoning hatred for the assistant engineer almost like a gourd in his throat, stood mute. The assistant, a trig, handsome, well-knit man of above thirty, stepped into the shower-bath room, and, his hands on his hips, gazed steadily into the face of the disrated man.

"There'll be none of that, Danforth," he rapped justifiably. "Out with your 'Aye, aye,' my man, or to the mast you go." "To the mast" is a confrontation by the executive officer, if not the commanding officer, for punishment.

"Aye, aye, sir," muttered the coal heaver, whipped. After a pause, and meeting the gaze of the assistant, he added: "You're hounding me. A man's game, do you call that?" A man for'ard may say a good deal to an officer when there are no witnesses, and the drunken oiler had left the shower room.

The assistant stared incredulously at the coal heaver.

"Hounding you?" he replied quietly. "Let me tell you something, man to man; you're hounding yourself. You're sulking. You're not playing the game. Where's your spine, man? You're a cut above these muckers. Show it! Vindicate your class! Sulking is not your speed. Stop it. Don't show me that when you're with the other men, or I won't take it so easy. Your cruise is near an end. You've no just grudge. You deserved what you got, and you know it. Then go through with it! There's no disposition to hound you. But you'll do coal-heaver's duty, my man, and you'll do it respectfully—remember that!"

Arkwright swung and left the shower room. Danforth ground his teeth. He saw a gruesome fag end to his cruise. His hatred for the assistant engineer corroded him. It was unjust. But it was human.

"I'll play even with that whipper-snapper," he said, in his heart. "I can stand on my head until I'm out of these dungarees—and then I'll play even with that one!"

CHAPTER II.

Danforth landed in the ship's brig on the next day, ironed at wrists and ankles, a marine sentry standing guard over him.

Mr. Arkwright, an alert officer and engineer, and no wardroom lounging, had donned a suit of dungarees to crawl into an out-of-use boiler for an examination of some leaky tubes. Emerging from the boiler, a figure of muck and grease, the assistant, swaying in an aisle of the for'ard engine room, just abaft the furnace room, shed the suit of dungarees, heaping them on the engine-room deck as he removed them.

Without glancing into the furnace room, unaware of what men were on watch in there, he called out:

"Here, one of you men, stow these dungarees."

The firemen were all busy with shovels and slice bars before the open doors of the roaring furnaces. Danforth was the only unoccupied man in the furnace room. Also, he was the only coal heaver there present at the moment. On watch, he had crawled out of the bunkers to stand panting for a few moments under the breeze of a windsail bellying through a hatch.

The assistant engineer, absorbed in consideration of the state of the leaky boiler tubes, did not notice for a moment that there had been no response to his order as to the stowing in a locker of the dungarees he had taken off. Looking up, as he was about to leave the engine room to make for the officers' shower room, he saw Danforth gulping blasts of cool air from the windsail's mouth, and staring at him.

"Doing anything, Danforth?" the assistant said, civilly enough, to the coal heaver. He saw that the other men were busy, and he knew that Danforth had heard his first order, given at random. "Stow these dungarees for me in a locker somewhere, so that I can find them the next time I need them, will you?"

A decent enough routine order, officer to man; nothing menial in the performance of the little job, considering

the circumstances. But Danforth, wrought up, resentful of this kind of discipline, and disliking the assistant engineer without valid reason, saw the menialness of it. So he placed his hands behind his back, and stared vacantly into the mouth of the windsail. A slap, this, which no officer could be expected to stand. The firemen had noticed it, and were viewing the incident furtively out of the corners of their eyes. There was nothing for the assistant engineer to do but to enforce his command. He went about that quietly, without passion.

"You heard me, Danforth?" he inquired of the coal heaver, his tone casual, no trace in it of an anger which might have been justified.

Danforth, peering into the orifice of the bellying windsail, made no reply, nor did he move; disobedience of an order, in plain sight and hearing of shipmates. The assistant engineer took the only course left to him.

"Sloan," he said to one of the firemen, "go on deck and tell the chief master-at-arms that he is wanted here." The fireman returned with the brawny "Jimmy Legs" within a minute. "Take that man to the mast," said the assistant to the ship's policeman.

In a jiffy, Danforth was "at the stick," confronted by the executive officer, charged with refusing duty. He said nothing while Mr. Arkwright related the circumstances in simple words, without malice, heaping nothing on. At a nod from the executive officer, the master-at-arms led the coal heaver to the brig, up in the eyes of the ship on the berth deck, and put a marine sentry over him.

"What's the trouble with that man, Arkwright?" Mr. Boyd, the executive officer, asked the assistant engineer, in his unofficial tone, as the coal heaver was being led below. "Going 'musth' on you?"

"Something like that—and I'm sorry," was the assistant engineer's reply. "I can understand how the fellow feels over being broken. He's our sort, you know—he never belonged for'ard. The usual hash and tragedy when a man

meant to be a gentleman gets into blue-jacket's gear. I like the man. He was the best yeoman I've ever been shipmates with, barring his shore-liberty drunks. He's decent all through. Imagines that I am persecuting him, whereas, knowing how he feels about things—I think he's brooding about family matters, too—I'd go any length to save his face and his feelings. But of course I can't let him show me up before the other men below. I believe I'll be as glad when that man's cruise is ended as he himself will be. The poor devil is in a rotten position, and I don't in the least blame him for his state of mind."

"H'm," said the "first luff" reflectively. "The same old mess, as you say, when a man of his betwixt-and-between type gets into a uniform for'ard. What do you want us to do with him, Arkwright?"

"Go light on him, since you're decent enough to ask me," was the assistant's reply.

"You'd better make the charge 'neglect of duty' instead of 'refusing duty,' then," suggested the executive officer. "'Refusing duty' wouldn't sound very good to the skipper; you know his views as to that."

"So be it—and I'm glad you'll let the man down easily," said the assistant. "I'd feel pretty small if I thought there could be any basis for his belief that I am hounding him."

"Tush! They all think that!" said the "first luff." "Ten days in irons for him, say?"

"Or five," suggested the assistant.

And so Danforth had been brought to the mast from the brig, confronted by the commanding officer and charged with neglect of duty, and by that form of summary court-martial sentenced to five days in double irons. An intensified hatred for the assistant engineer raged and rankled in his heart as the irons were snapped on his wrists and ankles by the master-at-arms. Of course he was wrong. But the most imaginary oppression must have some sort of meat to feed upon.

The brigged coal heaver squatted on

a ditty-box, the irons not only burning his wrists and ankles, but searing his soul, and made no effort to ride the breakers of bitterness that washed over him. Few men do, undergoing their first trick in a man-o'-war brig.

The ship's brig, the extreme for'ard compartment on the berth deck, held wire lockers for some of the deck hands, Mulvey, the ship's cook, among the number, which offered a good pretext for that malign fat galley man to waddle below, on pretense of getting something out of his locker, soon after Danforth had been put in irons.

He gave a well-simulated start as of mingled surprise and grief when he saw the ironed coal heaver seated gloomily on the ditty-box, although he had come below for no other reason in life save to see that "gentleman for'ard" writhing in his misery. And so the wheezy, raspy tone of sardonic sympathy was Mulvey's.

"Oho!" said he, hands clasped over paunch, beady eyes blinking wickedly. "They got you hobbled, have they? Now, I call that a shame; I call it a swab-o'-grease, slumgullion shame. Man that'd wore the buttons, too, and sat at a nice varnished desk with blottin' pads, and had a common, onnery bluejacket to empty his spitkit—well, well, it's a sin and a scandal to the service, blight me if it ain't! D'ye know what I'd do, matey? Why, I'd take and write a letter about it to the seckeretary of the navy, douse my eyeballs if I wouldn't! This yere thing ain't to be thought of—a gentleman for'ard a-sittin' gloomy like in a ship's brig, all ready to bust into tears at a moment's notice—no, siree, it ain't right! You write to the seckeretary of the navy about it, matey. He'll fix it all right. He'll turn you loose by telegraft, wireless telegraft, and who knows?—maybe he'll make you a sure'-nough officer, with a sword in your hand, and —"

Mulvey stopped here with a gasp, and his teeth clicked together like the impact of castanets. A muscular young hand had reached out and grasped the rear neck scruff of his greasy guernsey, and the ship's cook, in the midst of his

irony, was yanked aft with a sudden grip of power that almost left his eyes hanging upon his cheeks.

The hand belonged to the moon-faced young marine who, dozing on post, had been awakened by Danforth at the dawn of the previous morning. He had at that moment taken the sentry post at the brig door, and had overheard the cook's ironical barbs.

Holding the guernsey scruff in the viselike grip of able-bodied youth, the moon-faced marine leaned down from his gangling stature until his countenance was only about two inches removed from the amazed jowls of the ship's cook.

"Out o' this brig and back to your pans, you dirty kag o' tallow," remarked the moon-faced marine. "And the next time I nail you easin' that kind of swine's talk at a decent guy in hard luck, I'll sink this bay'net up to the shank in that front annex o' yours, d'ye get that?" And he spun the outraged cook around like a top, and fairly booted him out of the compartment. Then the moon-faced marine took his stand at the door, and watched for other locker searchers with a discerning and a baleful eye.

The friendliness of the thing touched Danforth, the more so because, though the twenty and odd chief petty officers of his former mess could see squarely into the brig from where they sat at their table in the compartment just aft, not a man jack of them appeared at the brig door to toss him a word of comfort or civility in his wretchedness.

That night the ship ran into the heel of a typhoon. Like most American cruisers built in the nineties, the *Tacoma* was top-heavy, with an overweight of guns and gun gear on the main deck; guns that, in a big sea, were always threatening to break loose from their fastenings. It was the typhoon's black fag end, about six hours of it, but the *Tacoma* swallowed the better part of twenty-four hours on her beam ends, like a lumber schooner with a scandalous deckload.

Danforth, brig-hobbled, was hurled fore and aft in the ship's pitchings,

from port to starboard and reverse in the beam endings, like a loose and ownerless ditty-bag; banged against lockers, bruised against bulkheads, battered, contused, cut, until he was one monolithic ache to the very marrow of his bones.

When Mullen, the moon-faced marine, came on post at midnight after his four hours off, he found Danforth stretched out on the brig's deck, trying futilely to hang on with raw and bleeding fingers to the rough wire of one of the starboard under lockers. The sentry, himself clutching the lockers to keep his feet in the ship's mad gyrations, reached the coal heaver, and bent over him. There was a slight click, and the bracelet on Danforth's right wrist suddenly loosened and clanged from its chain to the deck. With the same key the marine unlocked one of the leg irons, and Danforth was free to stand on his feet and hold on for dear life and the intactness of his bones.

The helping hand again from an ignored member of the ship's company, a thrust-about sea soldier with whom Danforth had not passed half a dozen words during all the cruise! The coal heaver was beginning to get a new focus.

"I'll tip you, matey, if I see the 'legs' or the sergeant of the guard comin'," said Mullen, the marine, hoarsely funnelling the words through his palms to make himself heard above the wild tumult. "Then all you got to do is to spring-snap the irons on again, see? I'd have me belt swiped and be slammed in here in the irons meself if they caught you with loose irons, savvy? Never mind where I pinched the key. I kind o' thought, when I made love to that key a while back, that it might come in handy some time." And the decent, banged-around, jumped-upon poor devil of a sea soldier with the man's gizzard groped his way back to the brig door and took up his watch.

On the day before the coal heaver was released from the brig for duty, Mr. Arkwright, fresh and immaculate in his uniform of white—the ship had

by then got into a warm latitude—appeared in the brig. Danforth stared sullenly at the offensively trig assistant engineer. Still feeding upon the meat of an imaginary oppression, his warped conclusion could not have it otherwise than that the officer, having no business in the brig, had come there solely to regale himself with the spectacle of his ironed disgrace. A conclusion as unworthy as it was warped, but when a downed man has no positive enemy he never lacks adeptness in manufacturing one.

"What sort of weather have you made of it, my man?" asked the assistant, with a brisk cordiality.

Danforth loathed that "my man," though the officer had merely employed it through force of sea habit.

"Better than you could have hoped," replied the coal heaver, omitting the "sir."

The assistant glanced about, and saw that the marine sentry at the brig door was not listening.

"See here, Danforth," he said, in a tone of patience, "you are not measuring up to your form. Chuck the surlineness. It's childish. I want to be your friend. Just let that idea seep into your mind—your friend. Now look. Hauptmann, the fireman who got your yeoman's job when you were disgraced, is making a mess of his work. I am afraid he is not going to do as yeoman. He's now engaged on the quarterly accounts, and he is over his head; the accounts are a hash. I can have you taken off the coal-heaver's work and assigned to instruct Hauptmann in the yeoman's billet. That will carry you to your cruise's end in San Francisco with unblistered hands. Do you want that?"

Friendly to the point-stretching stage of friendliness, yet not sufficiently so for a man with a purely imaginary grievance. The clean, trig, shaved immaculateness of the assistant engineer grated upon the brig-sore coal heaver with his jaundiced view of that highly competent officer. Danforth hungered to clash with him when, at his cruise's finish, he should be wearing civilian's

mufti, but he purposed having no further truck with him while still a man-o'-war's man.

"I'll heave coal till I'm paid off," he replied brittily.

The officer candidly showed his chagrin.

"As you please," he said, turning to leave the brig. "I begin to feel that you deserve no sympathy, Danforth," halting and coming back a step or two. "I have persisted in friendliness toward you because, in my eighteen years of service, you are the only enlisted man who ever showed me that he considered I treated him unfairly. It doesn't sit lightly on me that you should have that mistaken idea in your head. You're as hard a trial to a man's patience as ever I encountered on a man-o'-war. But my offer stands open: you can have an easy billet of it for the rest of your cruise as instructor of Hauptmann in yeoman's work, if you want it. You'll have time to think it over between now and to-morrow when you're turned loose."

"You threw me out of my log-room billet," said the coal heaver, feeling in the throat of him that these words were not the truth, "and you'll never get me to make so much as the scratch of a pen in there again."

Danforth was unironed and restored to duty on the following day, and he sweated and choked in the bunkers for the remainder of the run to Honolulu, where the *Tacoma* dropped her mud-hook to coal ship.

CHAPTER III.

The hands worked with dogged, tireless speed at the coaling, as men-o'-war's men will when there is a home-ward-bound pennant flying. They had no eye for the softness of the sky, no time for the languor of the Hawaiian scene, no feeling for the bewitching breath of the Hawaiian waters, replete with suggestions for dreams without end. To get home—that was the idea that lent a sort of fury of endurance to their weary arms and aching backs.

But three weeks remained before Christmas—and these men had put in the three Christmases of that cruise on the China station. The time of most of the men was up or nearly so. They would be paid off at San Francisco, and, before reshipping, they would race to every corner of the land for the festival of holly and mistletoe at home.

After the record-breaking coaling, finished at midday of the *Tacoma*'s second day in Honolulu Harbor, the grinning, grizzled old bo'sun's mate at the gangway sang out, at a word from the officer of the deck, that, if the ship were smartly cleaned, up would come the anchor, and the homeward-bound pennant once again flap to the breeze on the afternoon of the following day, for the last leg of the run to San Francisco.

A hoarse cheer, with almost a whimper of happiness in it, broke from the throats of the men for'ard when they caught this word. They attacked the mean job of ship scouring after coaling as if every man had a grudge against his cleaning station; swabbed, scrubbed, polished with the frenzy of men panting at the pumps of a sinking ship. They'd have her ready for that up-anchoring if the bones protruded through their hands!

Within four hours the ship that had been dirtier than a Spanish collier looked like a burnished model of a man-o'-war in a glass case. Then the port boom was swung out, and from the slippery footing of the boom the dog-tired but glad men for'ard leaped into the sea and swam and splashed and sputtered in the blue salt water, hoarsely bawling: "All hands up anchor!" in the ecstasy of ship-tired, cruise-wearied men almost hysterically looking forward to their early release.

Mr. Arkwright, the assistant engineer, strolling the port quarter-deck alone, with his hands clasped behind him, studied the swimming scene reflectively, his eyes kindling every time the men's "All hands up anchor!" cry fell upon his ear. He had as much reason as any of them for loving the music of that thrilling call.

A pretty young Kanaka mother, brown-skinned and soft-eyed, came on board. She was a bumboat woman for visiting ships of war. With her basket of fruits, tobacco, cigarettes, candies, miscellaneous small gear for the tempting of the men for'ard, on one side of her, and holding in the hollow of her arm a very young baby with a skin of brown satin and wide, alert eyes of wonder, she sat on the port side of the for'ard deck, close to the break of the fo'c'sle, near where the bluejackets hovered about the lighted smoking lamp.

The ruggedly pleasant face of the assistant engineer wreathed into a sort of curious, contemplative smile at the sight of the Kanaka baby. He strolled for'ard, and halted before the pretty Hawaiian mother and the child babbling Kanaka talk in baby-ese. The baby, squirming in its mother's clasp, reached up its arms pleadingly to the officer, and smiled droolingly at him. The officer reached down, and took the baby in his arms. He was obviously inexpert at this work. But he seemed to be willing to learn. The brown baby, wholly content, manifested its contentment by passing its tiny fingers tentatively over his face and cooing at him.

The Kanaka mother beamed up at him. The lounging, smoking bluejackets around the smoking lamp grinned. The fathers among them, viewing the picture, scratched thoughtfully under their caps. The officer, holding the brown baby less clumsily as he seemed rapidly to get the hang of the work, strolled up and down the quarter-deck with the utterly pleased and contented mite.

He stepped into the messroom with the baby in his arms. There was a roar from the five or six officers lounging there. The assistant engineer sat down, and rode the delighted baby to Banbury Cross. There was an expression of half-sheepish happiness on his sea-bronzed face. Then he started for'ard to return the Kanaka baby to its mother. The paymaster, Mr. Bolland, fell in stride with him.

"Practicing, old man?" the paymaster asked the assistant engineer, smiling.

"Yes," replied the officer holding the baby. "I like it. Seems to be a sort of trick about the way of holding 'em just right, but I presume a fellow falls into it naturally after a bit, eh?"

"As naturally as eating," said the paymaster, a father.

Mr. Arkwright restored the wide-eyed Kanaka baby to its mother, and paced the quarter-deck with the paymaster.

"Queer, isn't it, Boland," he asked thoughtfully, after they had paced the quarter-deck's length a couple of times, "that a man should never have seen his first kidlet?"

"Well, I'm one that knows to a T how you feel about that," said the paymaster. "I didn't see my first until he was nearly three years old. He was born a week after I went to sea for a Mediterranean cruise. That little beggar looked good to me when I first clapped eye on him, Arkwright! But would he have any commerce with me for a week or so? None whatever! He vastly preferred the old black butler at the home of my wife's folks. I remember how that cut me at the time. But we soon became the best of pals; so don't worry about that."

"By Jove, I never thought of that!" exclaimed the assistant engineer. "Didn't take to you at first, eh? Well, that *will* be a dig if it happens to me! I believe I'd be imbecile enough to feel all torn up about it! You see, I've been looking forward every waking minute for two years and more to seeing that little lassie of mine—my first, of course—and if she views me with distrust when I first take her in my arms, I positively believe I'll feel like somebody court-martialed and set back twenty numbers! But they don't *all* do that, do they?" submitting the question to the seasoned father of several, with actual wistfulness.

"Oh, no, not all," replied the paymaster comfortingly. Then, after a pause: "By the way, Arkwright, did you know that there's another man on

board that's going home to a first child that he's never seen?"

"No, is there?" asked the assistant engineer, with immediate keen interest. "Certainly I didn't know that. Who the deuce is he? Not one of us aft?"

"No; a man for'ard," said the paymaster. "My yeoman was telling me about it a while back. It's Danforth, that poor devil of an out-of-place coal heaver that used to be your yeoman."

The assistant engineer stared at the paymaster.

"Danforth!" he said, welling over with the surprise of it. "I never knew that. I wish I had known it. If I had, I believe I'd have lied to save him his yeoman's billet. I went pretty far to keep him from being disgrated as it was. Well, well! Danforth in the same boat with me—both of us going home to first babies we've never seen! I wish there were some way of getting that fellow out of the bunkers before we make San Francisco. I've schemed for that, but the man won't have it; imagines that I'm his enemy, and won't let me do anything to help him."

"Dynamite won't get an idea like that out of the head of a man for'ard, once he gets it in," commented the paymaster. "Rather a game chap, isn't he?"

"Too game by half," said the assistant engineer. "Takes his medicine as stolidly as a nabbed Chinese pirate. That's the devil of it. He's too game for his own good. When he was in the brig, I offered to do the best I could for him, and he snubbed me. Why do men of education, like Danforth, drift into this man's navy, and put themselves in the way of falling into such dreary messes as he is now wallowing in?"

"Heave ho, and a bottle of rum," off-handedly replied the paymaster. "And then some more bottles of rum. That's it, nearly always, of course."

Mess gear was piped, and the two officers separated.

"Going home to his first young one, just as I am," the assistant engineer muttered to himself, as he went below to the wardroom. "That explains a lot

of things. I wish the ruffian would let me do something for him!"

At four bells of the midwatch that night, Kenny, the ship's apothecary, routed Mr. Gifford, the surgeon, out of his wardroom bunk.

"Hauptmann, the engineer's yeoman, is sick, sir," he told the surgeon.

"What's the matter with him?" sleepily asked the surgeon. "Has he been on beach liberty?"

"No, sir," replied the apothecary. "He doesn't drink, anyhow. I can't exactly make him out. At least, sir, I don't want to take the responsibility. High fever, and eyes popping out of his head. Delirious, too. I thought I'd better notify you, sir."

"Right," said the surgeon, hustling into uniform.

Hauptmann, since his promotion from fireman to Danforth's billet, had gratefully allowed his hammock to repose in the nettings, and slept on the folding cot in the engineers' log room, aft on the port side of the berth deck and just for'ard of the pay office. The surgeon found the fair-haired young German tossing and muttering incoherently, his senses completely gone, his strained blue eyes fixed and staring. Surgeon Gifford had served several cruises on the Asiatic station. So he needed but one glance at the delirious man. He knew the diagnosis only too well.

"Your tongue between your teeth, now, Kenny," said the surgeon to the apothecary. "I'll see the skipper at once. If there's to be any announcing, he can do it. This man has Asiatic cholera."

"That's what I thought, sir," said the apothecary.

"How's that? Do you know the symptoms?" asked the surgeon.

"Served aboard a ship that was swept with it, and got through it myself, sir," said the apothecary.

"Good! I had it, too, myself, at Shanghai, fourteen years ago," said the surgeon briskly. "So we're all right, the pair of us. We'll get to work over

this man, but he has a virulent dose of it, and he's going to die."

While the apothecary quickly assembled materials for the treatment of the delirious yeoman, the surgeon hastened to the main deck.

"Rouse the commanding officer," he said to the marine sentry on the skipper's door. "And if you overhear my talk with him, keep what you hear locked back of your lips, my man, or, if the word gets for'ard, I'll know where it started."

The commanding officer, with a lounging robe thrown over his pajamas, appeared at his cabin door in the dimness, and started for'ard through his office to join the surgeon.

"That will be far enough, if you please, Captain Bisbee," the surgeon called out from the outside of the office door. The skipper paused, surprised, in the middle of the office. "Just as well for you to take no chances until I get time to disinfect myself. There's a man below—Hauptmann, engineers' yeoman—down with Asiatic cholera. Discovered it three minutes ago, and am notifying you at once for your guidance, sir. The man probably will die. I am going below now to do what I can. I'll try to hold the infection to the engineers' log room, where Hauptmann bunks."

"Thank you, Mr. Gifford," said the skipper quietly. "I'll take the deck. Report progress to me there."

Thus calmly are momentous and sinister occurrences grappled with on ships of war.

"No blabbing, my man," said the captain to the moon-faced marine sentry on his door. "The crew will be notified in due time."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the moon-faced marine, Danforth's Samaritan; and, though he went off post ten minutes later, no word did he utter when he went for'ard, though many men were coming off and going on watch at the same time.

The sleeping wardroom officers were quietly roused and informed that a man was dying of Asiatic cholera in the compartment immediately for'ard of

the wardroom. They turned out, got into uniform, and gathered in the mess-room on the main deck, where, until dawn, they smoked and chatted about everything else in the world except plagues on board ships. It is the tacit thing among our officers not to speak of these imminent matters while the situation is taut; later they may become reminiscent.

Hauptmann died at eight bells, just as the midwatch was being relieved. Within half an hour after his death, his body had turned to a bluish black. Peter Gennadius, the old Greek sail-maker's mate, was summoned aft to the log room, where he made a brisk, neat job of sewing the body in a fresh hammock, wrapping it about with the flag, and attaching a weight to the ankles. Peter cheerfully remained in the log room until the fumigation, in order not to increase the chance of contagion by mingling with the men for'ard.

The steam cutter was called away. The surgeon and the apothecary, asking for no assistance, carried the body up the wardroom companion, for'ard to the gangway, down the gangway ladder, and into the steam cutter. The cox'un and firemen of the steam cutter were at their places; both understood. The cutter was headed down the harbor for the open sea.

Five miles out the surgeon nodded to the fireman to shut off steam. The sun was just peering over the edge of the world; the unawakened waters lapped whisperingly against the sides of the cutter; little gusts of morning breeze, soft as wool, fluttered the blue-jackets' neckerchiefs.

The gray-haired surgeon removed his cap, the men following suit, and the surgeon read the prayer for the dead. Then the surgeon and the apothecary raised the body, rested it on the gun'l for a moment, and lowered it, without a splash, into the sea. The weight at the ankles sufficed. The body sank at once, leaving only a few bubbles at the glassy surface.

Thus suddenly disappeared from the world a man who had been smoking his pipe at a ship's gangway twelve

hours before. The whites of the men's eyes glittered when they saw half a dozen huge fins, that had been sinisterly circling about the cutter, suddenly disappear. But they said no word.

"'Bout ship," ordered the surgeon; the engine throbbed, and the cox'un headed the cutter back to the ship.

The bos'un's mate was just piping all hands when they returned on board. Scarcely were the men out of their hammocks before they were summoned to quarters; a highly unusual thing at turn-to in the morning. They fell into their places at "quarters" on deck, expectant but silent. Some of them knew. A ship's whisper travels fast. But their curiosity was acute when the skipper, brisk but grave, appeared at the mast, the executive officer and officer of the deck beside him, and addressed them.

The skipper's words were reassuring, to the point. A man for'ard, working aft, had died an hour before. His body had been consigned to the deep. The disease was Asiatic cholera. This disease, as no doubt many of the older men for'ard knew, was not necessarily fatal, but it was a bad business at best, and the only safety lay in prompt treatment for the man seized with it. Any man feeling any unusual sensation, especially a pain in the region of the stomach, was to report instantly to the surgeon in the sick bay for treatment. The men must not permit their minds to dwell upon the matter needlessly. The contagion probably could be controlled. The hatches would be battened down and the ship thoroughly fumigated at once. The skipper was proud of his ship's company; would be prouder still if all hands took this blow with the patience and fortitude of American men-o'-war's men. It would be a blow at the very best, because the ship would no doubt be quarantined in Hawaiian waters; so there was of course no chance for the *Tacoma* to make San Francisco for the Christmas at home. It was a sharp disappointment, he knew, not less sharp aft than for'ard. But it was an incident of the service, and he depended upon his ship's com-

pany to take the disappointment like American sailors. Dismissed. Up went the yellow quarantine flag.

The stunned men sighed as they broke ranks, but that was all. A few of the first-cruise men muttered a bit as they turned to at their cleaning stations, but the older men quickly shamed them into silence. Here were the happy home-at-Christmas plans of more than three hundred men knocked into flinders at a word; they smoked their pipes, and revised their plans, with Christmas left out. The few mutterers were unpopular. This is discipline.

As to the fear of contagion, few words passed, no matter what all might be thinking; and there were men for'ard who knew what it meant to be on board a plague-swept man-o'-war.

The port doctor of Honolulu came off to the *Tacoma* in his cutter. His news was bad. Cholera had broken out in the Chinese quarter of Honolulu on the afternoon before. A steamship had brought it from China, with a cargo of Chinese coolies destined for the Hawaiian sugar plantations. A lot of the Chinamen had died and been tossed over the side of the steamer on the voyage from China to Honolulu; the steamer's medical man had—criminally—logged these deaths as "pneumonia" and other contagious diseases; thus the coolies, landing in Honolulu, had brought the infection. Extraordinary efforts would be made to confine the plague to the Chinese quarter.

The *Tacoma*, of course, would be rigidly quarantined, and the port doctor would be compelled to ask the *Tacoma*'s skipper to pull up her mudhook and find an anchorage farther down the harbor, so as not to infect the inner harbor. No doubt the man who had died on board the *Tacoma* had become infected while swimming around the ship on the previous day. A creek that ran through the Chinese quarter of Honolulu found its outlet into the harbor only a few hundred yards from where the man-o'-war was anchored, and Hauptmann, swimming, had swallowed some of the infected sea water.

From that day, and for two long

months to follow, misery set in for that ship's company. The plague did not spread. Prompt and thorough fumigation between decks—a fumigation which ruined all of the uniforms and other clothes of all hands fore and aft except those they stood in—stopped that. But the man-o'-war became a craft of unholy dread to the people of Hawaii, even to the other ships in the harbor.

The *Tacoma* was ordered to cruise among the islands. She wallowed for two months in the swells of the outer harbors of Lahaina, of Hanelei, of Hilo. The ship's rations, fore and aft, were strictly salt horse and canned abominations; no vegetables; each time the mess stewards tried to get ashore in the steam cutter for fresh provisions, they were met by the shotgun quarantine at the landings.

At last, long after the plague, which had been held to the Chinese quarter of Honolulu, had been thoroughly stamped out there, the quarantine against the *Tacoma* was lifted. By that time the ship's company had begun to compare their ship to the *Kilauea Hou*, the steamer which carries the lepers from Honolulu to the leper island of Molokai. There had been no Christmas on board; there were no festival provisions, and the ship was not even dressed for the holiday, for the officers of the pariah man-o'-war were quite as sore as the men for'ard, and in no more of a mood for festival observances.

The ship was lying in the Hilo roadstead when the skipper got the long-delayed notification that the quarantine had been lifted.

"Three-day liberty for the men at once, by watches, here in Hilo," said the skipper to the executive officer.

The executive officer rubbed the stubble of his neglected chin, and smiled.

"Hilo, sir," he said to the commanding officer, "will have the distinction of witnessing the most colossal drunk in the history of the American navy."

"So be it," said the skipper, with a snap of the jaws, his eyes twinkling nevertheless. "Can you blame the men?"

"I cannot, do not, and will not," replied the executive officer.

The starboard watch, about one hundred and sixty men, went ashore in Hilo that afternoon—a hundred and sixty men whose enlistments already, for the most part, had expired; who had missed their Christmas at home; who for two months, on monotonous sea rations, had been unnecessarily huddled on board a ship unfairly accused of being a plague ship, a ship hounded from port to port in Hawaiian waters, to wallow in the heavy swell of outer harbors; their nerves on edge, hopelessness placarded all over them; and here they were, gold in the pockets of all, turned loose for three-day liberty in the agreeable little town of Hilo, Hawaii, at the foot of the mighty volcano of Mauna Loa! There would be doings! The eyes of the men glittered with anticipation as they crowded into the steam cutter to make the beach.

At the landing, made with difficulty on account of the swell, it was found by this tensely anticipatory liberty party that a party of about fifty American school-teachers, women mainly from California, Washington, and Oregon, who had made the trip from Hilo up to the Burning Lake of Kilauea, were waiting to take the steamer *Claudine* back to Honolulu; and the *Claudine* was not due to get under way for two hours after the landing in Hilo of the highly taut liberty party.

"Belay," was the word passed through all of that party of bluejackets when this fact was ascertained. "There'll be nothing doing as to the grog until these American women have left the beach and gone aboard their steamer."

Discipline again, and gallantry, too, a marvelous example of it. The ship-weary men, their money jingling in the bags under their mustering shirts, lounged innocently, quietly, through the streets of Hilo, giving the grogshops the utter go-by for two mortal hours, until the wholesome American school-mistresses, chattering wonderingly among themselves over the amazingly sedate shore behavior of the long-quar-

antined men-o'-war's men, boarded their steamer for Honolulu.

Then, and not until then, the relaxed liberty party broke loose.

It was a historic Saturnalia of sailor-men ashore. Long before the dusk blurred the outlines of Hilo's water front, the one hundred and odd husky Kanaka men who had been hastily sworn in as special policemen to "manage" the liberty party of men-o'-war's men, took precipitately to the mountains. Thereby they showed a truly Polynesian wisdom.

CHAPTER IV.

Danforth, ashore with this liberty party of the starboard watch, remained apart from the riotous carnival. He drank nothing. Not because the old desire did not clutch him about the throat like an invisible, tugging, hot lasso; the memory of the old brain-clouding method of relaxing the tension of depression, of ameliorating the gray rigor of life, swept him like gusts of hot wind that made him gasp for breath. Each time he was so swept his jaws set grimly; and his pulses throbbed tumultuously, almost rollickingly, in unison with the deep inner voice that told him he would never yield—never!

Had it not been for his last yielding, would he now be lounging dejectedly through the sunny, slumbersome streets of Hilo wearing the uniform of a bluejacket? It was the first time he had been ashore in that uniform. It became him, as it is bound to become a well-set-up man of erect carriage who knows the difference between walking and shambling. But he loathed it; made no bones of the loathing when his conscience rapped back at him the old familiar axiom that a man should respect the uniform he wears. The uniform was all right on whom it belonged; he had no quarrel with that dictum, but it did not belong on him. He would never have shipped as a bluejacket. Why, then, was he wearing the uniform of a bluejacket?

The hoarse, drunken babble of his

shipmates swarming in the water-front grogeries suggested the answer, because he had had no more control over a down-dragging appetite than they now had. But the difference that was to be! He laughed aloud. This man was not drifting on a remorse-swollen ethical tide, was no ready-to-hand subject for smug moral promptings. His resolution probed to the very fundamental of the matter, namely, as to whether, every other consideration aside, he was going to be a man or be a mouse. He chose the former with a grinding of the jaws; so that the temptation, which in former days would have been as the bombardment of huge guns, now was but as the dashing of confetti against a bronze image.

On the morning following the coming ashore of the liberty party, Danforth, in no particular mood for the sight of a crater scene without parallel in all the world, but mainly to detach himself from a spectacle of bluejacket revelry which now had passed all bounds, took horse, and rode up the long, precipitate trail to the Burning Lake of Kilauea, that sinister, appalling vent crater without which as a safety valve the majestic Mauna Loa, hugest of all volcanoes, towering many thousands of feet above, would be in endless, devastating eruption.

A party of the ship's officers, mounted, had taken the trail to the crater about half an hour ahead of him, and a handful of the still sober men for'ard were to make the ascent in a stage, later in the day. Danforth rode alone from choice. His affairs as a man-o'-war's man were not in such train as to inspire him with the shipmately spirit; his shipmates, most of them openly pleased at his disrangement, as they would have been at the downfall of the most popular man among them, had become burs upon his spirit, and after two months of cruising quarantine with an ever-visible clutter of leering countenances, solitariness was as grateful to him as an oasis to a caravan.

The sun was setting over the edge of the shadowy crater in a lurid conflagration of zenith-flung crimson when

Danforth, after registering at the Volcano House on Kilauea's brink and stabling his horse, started to stroll around the edge of the sultry, sulphur-fuming, sinisterly rumbling abyss, just then quiescent after a recent overflow of flame and lava which had seared wide paths down the steeps almost to the streets of Hilo, half a day's ride away.

About a hundred yards to the right of the hotel, on the footpath to the sulphur pits that line the crater's edge at irregular intervals, Danforth heard footsteps from behind a shelf of cooled lava around which the path wound. Then from back of the lava shelf a man's figure emerged as suddenly as the red sun, after its lingering gaze over the far edge of the crater, at that instant seemed to drop plummetwise from the sky, leaving the plateau wrapped in a purple dusk as if by some swiftly falling mantle from above. The man, in riding dress, and with a pair of field glasses slung over his shoulder, was walking smartly back to the hotel, which from that point was hidden by the curves of the path.

There was room for two to pass on the path. Danforth bore slightly outward to permit Assistant Engineer Arkwright to swing by him. But, by design, instantly formed, the coal heaver did not salute his superior officer.

The officer halted abruptly on his side of the path when but two paces away from the coal heaver. Danforth made as if to keep on, his saluting hand so little bent upon saluting that instead of swinging as heretofore with his stride it now remained hanging rigidly at his side. The officer could not fail to catch the manifest deliberation of this. He stepped into the middle of the path, blocking the coal heaver's way. His eyes glowed, and, although he spoke quietly, there was a certain resonance of determination in his tone.

"A moment, Danforth," he said. "Both of us, according to my understanding of regulations, rate a salute, afloat or ashore, from shipmates in this man's navy. As between the two of us,

the initiative as to the salute belongs to you."

Danforth, halting, clasped his bunker-calloused hands behind his back; he did it slowly, with a studied deliberation palpably designed to make his point more obvious.

"Do you exact it from me, when, as now, we are man to man, under nobody's eye—knowing the way you've been malevolently hounding me?" he asked the officer, his tone choked with an anger pitifully lacking in justification. "If you do, that makes you out smaller than I thought you were; and that was small enough, God knows. You profess to grant that I'm a man of your sort, and no mucker; and yet you throw down a suit of dirty dungarees, warm from your wearing, and command me to stow them for you; try to make a ship's lackey of me; and because I won't stomach that kind of a dog's dose, you have me clapped, ironed, into a ship's brig, where you come to gloat over me. And now, meeting me on the edge of a crater, with no eye upon us, and you in your jaunty mufti, you show still further your littleness by standing upon your right to a ship's salute. You'll never get it. Run back to the ship and report me and get me brigged again, if you like—and it will be like you; but you'll run without your salute, don't overlook that!"

Unjust talk, fighting talk, talk without precedent from an enlisted man to an officer; and Danforth knew well that it was none other as he let it fly. The officer pondered, impaling the coal heaver with his keen, searching eyes. Darkness was falling rapidly; the stars began to glitter. A dull, molten glow from the enormous depth of the crater enveloped and outlined the two men in a silhouette of dark red, like the reflection from an expiring grate fire.

"Danforth," said the officer, in a repressed tone, the tone of a man winning a difficult, self-imposed task of self-control, "I've tried every method that I could think of with you. None of them has succeeded. Now I am going to give you your chance. We are, as you say, man to man here. I am of the positive

belief that you stand in need of a drubbing. The issue will prove that. It may be that I am in need of such a thing myself."

He unslung his field glasses, and carefully placed them on the top of the shelf of lava; then he removed his riding coat, folded it with care, and deposited it in a neat heap beside the field glasses.

"There can be no harm in finding out," he went on; "and you are entitled to your try. As for myself, I couldn't turn in to-night with talk like that of yours ringing in my ears. Just step over here, away from the edge. You are in, I think, for a most unholy thumping. But I can't help that. You've been wanting it, it's just about what the doctor would order for you, and you've brought it on yourself."

He stepped briskly from the footpath along the crater to a level space between mounds of cooled lava, Danforth as briskly following him. From the perfect coolness of their manner, they might have been adjudged a pair of holidaying men about to measure off a space wherein to try their prowess at jumping.

"You talk like a man, even if you haven't treated me like one," said Danforth, pulling off his cap and sailing it atop of a distant lava mound.

He was tense, but wholly cool. His bunker-hardened fingers twitched with desire to even up in this elemental manner the score that had been oppressing him. He had no doubt of the outcome. If they were well matched, the power of a revenge righteously taken would balance the combat in his favor, and he went into this strange fight, thus strangely set, propelled by a wave of positive joyousness. With this was mingled a sort of forced admiration for the just-discovered mettle of this officer who was "giving him his chance."

The two men faced each other in the dusky gloom of the quickly falling night. Both tall, their height was equal. The coal heaver was slightly broader at the shoulders, but he was not quite so trimly built, nor so alert on his feet, as the officer. Both were

unusually muscular, fine, upstanding men. The coal heaver figured vaguely that his three months of toil in the bunkers would give him an advantage in the matter of hardening; he had no possible means of knowing that this officer had been the champion boxer of his Annapolis class, and that he kept himself on a razor edge of condition by two hours of work with the clubs and bells every day of his life at sea.

"Ready, my man?" calmly inquired the officer, as they confronted each other.

That hated "my man" again! Danforth felt the muscles of his arms contract at the words.

"So that it won't sit upon your conscience that you struck your superior officer first," went on the officer, as if he had been speaking across the table in his messroom, "here goes!" And his left shot out, overhand-corkscrewwise, for the coal heaver's jaw.

The coal heaver caught the blow, wondering a bit at the steam back of it, on his quickly raised guard. He knew a good deal more than the rudiments of boxing, mainly the defensive part of it, and he was very confident of his greater strength to offset the other man's superior boxing ability, which already he was willing to grant.

"Not badly blocked," muttered the officer, resuming the upright and measuring his man keenly. "Maybe you'll know how to catch this!" And, feinting with his left, his right shot with the force of a piston into the coal heaver's unguarded midsection.

The impact of the blow bending Danforth forward, the officer caught him on the point of the chin with a left that stretched him at full length in the lava dust, stunned and raging in his heart.

Danforth was back on his feet with the swiftness of a thrown jockey scrambling out of the way of the hoofs of flying horses. His coolness gone, he rushed at the officer like a horned animal charging, as if to bear his antagonist to the ground. The officer stepped back lightly, and straightened the charging coal heaver with a purposely light left on Danforth's neck.

"Is it to be rough and tumble, my man?" inquired the assistant engineer, noting the other man's blind, impetuous rush with a loosely held guard. "Better make it straight stand-up rules; the rough-and-tumble style is bruisers' work."

Danforth, too absorbed in his baffled rage to reply, tried a left feint quickly followed by a lead, all of the power of his shoulders back of it, with the right for the officer's head. The blow not only went wide by a foot, but brought a right counter, crashing easily through the coal heaver's guard, that sent his head back as if it had been loosely strung on wires, and flattened his nose, which immediately began to gush blood.

With an imprecation, Danforth led again, a feeling of hopelessness growing in him like a quick fungus. The officer, feeling the blood smearing his hand, permitted the coal heaver to come to a clinch with him. Up to that point, Danforth had not so much as tousled the officer's hair.

"Better call it a day's work, my man," suggested the officer, not even panting, as, pinning the coal heaver's arms, he swayed from side to side with him in the clinch. "You're out of form. I don't want to batter you. I don't ask you to strike your flag. We'll call it an armistice. I'm not the man to crow. Ho, would you!"

By a mighty effort, Danforth had got the officer's head gripped under his left arm, and, starting his right from the waist, crashed his fist against the officer's down-held jaw. The assistant engineer squirmed out of the coal heaver's neck clasp with a power that sent Danforth reeling, and, like a flash, planted both fists, one following the other with the swiftness of light, in the other man's face.

Danforth went down heavily again, battered, bleeding, enraged to the marrow. He knew that he was outclassed; all hope of winning had gone from him; all that he could hope for now, as once more he picked himself up, was to land a lucky punch, anything to make the thing look more even.

His guard up this time, once again

he rushed at the erect, alert, quietly waiting officer, blocked the swift right and left that were again carefully aimed at his head, and catapulted his weight into another clinch. Again rocking to and fro in this embrace of steel, Danforth, bent only upon evening up the bout, tried to backheel his man. The officer avoided that by thrusting the coal heaver forward, as if he had been waiting for it.

"If backheeling is the play, my man," he said, behind his locked teeth, but with no suggestion of anger in his voice, "it's a game for two!" And he suddenly pulled the coal heaver to him, thrust his right foot back of the other's heels, and hurled him backward again, Danforth going down like a sack of meal, the officer atop of him.

"I don't like this sort of dock-wallop work, you know, but if you're for it, by all means!" And he caught Danforth's throat with the fingers of his left hand, not in a choking clutch, but with a sufficiently holding one. "Now you're down. I'm sorry you would have it that way. We'll call quits now, eh? Let me recommend that idea. You're not humiliated. It merely happens that this is one of the games that I've studied. Just whisper to me that you're sick of the business, and up we stand."

"Your fight," sensibly replied Danforth.

Instantly the clutch at the coal heaver's throat relaxed, and the officer was on his feet. Not only that, he grasped the two hands of the prone coal heaver, and pulled him by main force to a standing position. Danforth, stunned, was swaying and unsteady. The officer plucked his coat from the lava shelf, and fumbled in the pockets, producing from one a small vacuum bottle filled with water, and from the other a silver flask of brandy. Quickly unscrewing the lid of the flask, he held it out to the coal heaver.

"Get a few gulps of this into you, old man," he said decently, and the whipped man did not, even in his moment of bitter humiliation, fail to catch, with a rush of gratitude that put a lump in his

throat, the difference between the "old man" and the "my man." "It will set you up."

"Liquor?" asked the coal heaver hoarsely.

"Yes, brandy; good brandy; drink your fill of it; you're a bit shaky—so am I, for the matter of that," said the officer, continuing to hold out the flask. He was not in the least shaky. Danforth knew that he was not; that he was only saying that he was to give a whipped man countenance; and, dazed as he was, a sense of wonderment as to whether, after all, he had been unjustly judging this man who had conquered him, percolated disturbingly through his mind. He waved the flask aside.

"Thank you, I'm not drinking," he said.

He felt weak, on the point of collapse; he caught the rich bouquet of the brandy from the flask that was being held almost under his nose; his imagination bounded at the swift thought of what, by way of release from the dejection of defeat and mental and physical weariness, a few swigs from the brandy flask would mean to him, and in waving it aside his heart sang joyously at this proof that he could thrust away the temptation. Beaten, he yet was a victor in one thing—the main thing!

"Not drinking, eh?" said the officer. "Good thing. That kind of a knock-off wouldn't hurt any of us, aft or for'ard. Try some of this water, then; it's from a good Hilo spring," extending the bottle. "It'll clear some of this stinging lava dust out of your throat."

Danforth, still dazed, his mind cloudedly striving to probe what was, to him, a wholly different side in the character of this officer whom he had been consumedly hating, whom now he felt he could no longer hate, took the offered bottle of water and drank avidly; and when he had finished the officer drank after him; Danforth noted this, too, and wondered.

"Let's see what we can do to get that face of yours swabbed, Danforth," said the assistant engineer then. He poured water from the bottle on a fresh hand-

kerchief until it was soaked, leaned forward in the now shrouding darkness, and washed the coal heaver's blood-smeared face as if the bluejacket had been some impetuous boy damaged about the face in an accident of play.

Danforth remained mute, sensing the dull misery of one pierced with the bitter knowledge that he has misjudged a fellow being. It was a feeling wholly apart from the well-known feeling of enforced admiration with which the vanquished commonly regards his vanquisher. It went far deeper; that, indeed, mainly comprised the retroactive bitterness of it. An unwilling vanquisher, and one with a heart of pity—Danforth now knew him to be that, and the thought of it made him dumb with searing self-reproach.

The officer, casting away the soaked handkerchief, struck a match, and peered by its flame into the coal heaver's face.

"Clean as a just-swabbed hatch gratting," he pronounced heartily. "Right as a trivet generally. But we've omitted one of the ceremonies of this sort of thing, I'm afraid, Danforth."

The coal heaver, by the light of the stars, saw the officer's outstretched hand. He grasped it eagerly.

"Arkwright, you are a man—a better man than I ever was or ever will be," he almost groaned.

"No, I'm not," quickly and emphatically replied the officer, pressing the coal heaver's hand. "I won't have you say that. It isn't true. I know what's in you, Danforth—better than you yourself know probably. And I can't and don't blame you for misjudging me. That's all over now. Forgotten, canceled, hull down, in the wake of yesterday. Now we start anew. Too bad the cruise is so near its end. And yet—"

He broke off suddenly, and laughed softly.

"Danforth," he went on presently, "I want to tell you something that you don't know. It bulks into a pretty good reason why, apart from the officer-and-man humbug, which of course we are bound to observe while under

the scrutiny of eyes, you and I should have a pretty good understanding as shipmates. Danforth, attend me, please; I, too, am going home—yes, and to San Francisco, too—to see my first young one for the first time! What do you think of that, eh? So you thought you were the only man on board the *Tacoma* with that tremendous bit of fun awaiting him, did you?" His voice suddenly went hoarse, and Danforth, in the darkness, could see him tugging at his collar.

The coal heaver roused himself from his daze as one who suddenly hears a peal of chimes.

"Do you tell me that?" he heard himself asking, his voice sounding far away in his own ears; his mind had suddenly become so cluttered with the images of happy forecastings that he scarce knew what he was saying. "I never dreamed anything like that. If I'd known that you—"

"You wouldn't have been so infernally willing to give me battle on the edge of a crater, eh?" the officer helped him out. "Well, I knew it about you—the more shame to me, I suppose, for having been so willing to take you on; and I wouldn't have been that, either, if I hadn't seen, plain as a capstan, that that was what you were spoiling for. But how is all this either here or there, with the main fact looming out of the squall—that here, on the brink of a volcano, and another volcano looming above, stand two men of the same ship's company, both of them babbling, after trying to pound each other's heads off, about their first babies that they've never seen! Man, man, if you can't see the humor of that, the everlasting burbling fun of it, yes, and the astonishing happiness of it, the—" He could not go on; his voice went back upon him as he groped for words; and Danforth, impulsively grasping the officer's hand again, felt a tear that was not of his own shedding splash on the back of his wrist.

"Isn't it the great thing to look forward to—and isn't the waiting *damnable*?" the coal heaver broke out inaptly, impulsively. He followed it up with a

remark of equal irrelevance: "Mine's a girl. What's yours, sir?"—"sir" for the first time since he had fallen into the warped belief that the assistant engineer was his ship's enemy.

"Girl, too," replied Mr. Arkwright, taking the other's irrelevance as a perfect matter of course. "Girl of two and a half." He paused. "And to think," he resumed, essaying to laugh to conceal the telltale break in his voice, "that I've never so much as clapped an eye on that—that pink-toed urchin!"

Across the scraggly patches of seared brush and the mounds of lava that had cooled ages before came the dull clangor of the hotel's dinner-announcing tom-tom. The officer put on his coat, and picked up his field glasses. The coal heaver groped among the mounds for his cap, and found it.

"*Aloha*, Danforth—I'm for the hotel mess to join the officers who came up with me," said the assistant engineer, once more stretching out his hand. "I'll sip a bit of a quiet toast to that little lass of yours—may she bloom like all the roses that ever were or ever will be! Good night."

He was gone down the dark path toward the hotel.

Danforth stood musing for a long while under the expanse of great stars serenely shedding their dim silver light on the cool tropic upland.

"Bloom like all the roses that ever were or ever will be," he said to himself, as he groped for the path. "And that's the man I have been hating!"

A conquered man's bodily bruises are forgotten when his bruised heart has been made whole.

CHAPTER V.

The *Tacoma* steamed to Honolulu after the port-watch liberty party, which followed the starboard watch for a tempestuous whirl ashore in Hilo, had been rounded up. At Honolulu she was to coal ship, once more break out the homeward-bound pennant which had been stowed in gloom when the quarantine flag had gone up—and

four bells for San Francisco and the cruise's end!

On the morning after the ship had dropped her mudhook at her old anchorage in Honolulu Harbor, Danforth was summoned aft to the engineers' log room from the bunkers, where he was on watch. Unswabbed, a figure of grime, he made his way, for the first time since he had been disgrated, to the door of his old office. The old chief engineer was seated in the swivel chair before the desk.

"Morning, yeoman," said the chief, a kindly gleam in his old, service-dimmed eyes.

Danforth stared at the chief, and smiled puzzledly.

"Yeoman that was, you mean, sir," he said. "I'm a coal heaver."

The chief wheeled comfortably in the swivel chair, pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, and blinked cheerily.

"Coal heaver, eh?" he said, twirling his thumbs on his stomach. "And how do you like coal heaving, Danforth?" He was a chatty old officer, and liked to talk with men for'ard, having himself been a man for'ard in his youth.

"I suppose nobody would take to coal heaving for the love of it, sir," replied Danforth, wondering what this summons was all about.

"No, I suppose not," said the old chief, suddenly stopping the thumb-twirling and taking to drumming on the blotting pad with his fingers. "Rough work for rough men. I know what it means to be in the bunkers. I stood my watches at that. It never hurt me that I know of. But I wouldn't care to tackle it again," smiling at the thought until his gray beard crinkled. "Danforth," he resumed, after a brief pause, "d'ye think it would be safe for me to send you ashore to weigh coal this morning?"

Danforth perplexedly wondered what ailed the machinist who had been doing yeoman's duty since the death of Hauptmann, and making a sad mess of the clerical work.

"Safe, sir?" he inquired. For the moment he forgot that the immediate occasion of his disgratement had been a

shore-weighting experience of his in Japan. But the chief had not forgotten.

"I mean," said the chief, "do you feel pretty sure that you've got a clutch on yourself now?" Then Danforth remembered.

"Yes, sir," he replied, out of hand. "If it's the drink you mean, why, I'm through with that; forever through with it."

"By George," exclaimed the chief, with a little thump of his fist on the blotting pad, "I believe you are! You were the only man jack of my whole gang below to come aboard sober from Hilo. Didn't drink a drop on the Hilo liberty, did you?"

"No, sir," replied Danforth. "I'm through."

"H'm!" said the chief. "I thought so. Had your fill of it, eh? H'm! Well, I don't often make a mistake about a man. I figured, and Mr. Arkwright figured, that a man who could control himself during his first shore liberty after that long, miserable quarantine business—well, that such a man would do; had earned another chance. Got your yeoman's uniform stowed in your locker?"

"Yes, sir," replied Danforth, the blood beginning to thump at his temples.

"Well, go and swab up and get into your rightful uniform, man," said the chief, watching Danforth out of smile-slitted eyes to enjoy the other man's joy. "You're a yeoman once more. Had you made yeoman again last night. It's a bit unusual, of course. Had to argue it out with the commanding officer. He doesn't like to rate a disgrated chief petty officer back to his billet during the same cruise. But it's all right. You're a yeoman, and you'll finish your cruise as you began it. So hop into yeoman's buttons now, and get ashore at once to weigh coal—we're up-anchoring for San Francisco to-morrow afternoon."

Danforth, feeling like a man suddenly released from prison and restored to citizenship, began confusedly to mumble his thanks.

"Tush, man," broke in the chief, "we're as glad as you are—Mr. Arkwright and myself, I mean. Both of us hated to see you go into the bunkers. We knew you didn't belong there. Thank Mr. Arkwright for a good deal of this, Danforth. He suggested it; been at me about it, in fact, ever since he returned on board from his shore visit at Hilo. My part in it was to wrestle with the skipper and bring him around. Thank Mr. Arkwright. He's your man."

Danforth, hastening below to swab up and to find the assistant engineer, came upon Arkwright, in dungarees, squatting alone on the steps of the after-engine platform, absorbedly tinkering with an out-of-order indicator which he had taken apart.

"Mr. Arkwright," said Danforth, at attention, with ship's manners of man to officer, in case there should be unseen eyes and ears about, "I've just seen the chief. You know why he sent for me. It's hopeless, my trying to thank you. I haven't words for it. Maybe there'll come a day when I'll have a chance to square this account—to make good to you for having gotten you so wrong, for having been such a dog in the manger."

"Belay the thanks, Danforth," said the assistant, fumbling with the greasy indicator. "The chief fixed it, great old chief! I'd like to hope I could always serve with so good a man! Glad you're back to your rate again, Danforth. The bunkers always could have got on without you, if you'd only known it." He paused, then broke out: "Shift into uniform, man! I want to see that coal come over the side! We're rounding Diamond Head to-morrow if the coaling is finished in time, and up yonder on the mainland there's a certain young party—two of 'em, in fact—that a couple of men serving on board this hooker are pretty keen to see! Get that coal weighed, yeoman!"

Danforth, hurrying under the shower and shifting into the uniform that had been folded away in his locker since the day of his disgratement—it seemed ages since he had worn it—wondered

vaguely if the time ever really would come when he would get the chance to "make good" to the assistant engineer who thus had raised him literally and figuratively from the depths. The prospect looked dim that such an opportunity would ever come his way.

In a corner of his locker he came upon a very old, curiously carved teak-wood box. He opened it, and gazed thoughtfully at a pair of tiny, beautifully wrought Chinese cups, babies' cups, jade of a dim green shot with golden gleams in certain slants of light. They were antiques, part of the loot of Peking, that Danforth had received as a gift in Shanghai from a Chinese com-prador whom he had saved from the anger of a mutinous crew of coolies.

Danforth was holding them with a locker full of gifts that he had been collecting for his little girl through all of the ship's wanderings on the Asiatic station. One of the jade cups would answer for his own child, he reflected. The other he promptly designed as a birthday cup for Arkwright's little girl. He would be back in civil life, and on an equal social plane with the assistant engineer, at the end of the cruise. Scrambling into uniform, he caught himself wondering if he would ever see Arkwright's child, and Arkwright his. He hoped so.

His shipmates gaped when Danforth appeared on deck spick and span in his chief petty officer's uniform. It was a sad blow to Mulvey, the ship's cook. But he took it glancingly, and, as Danforth shot by the galley for the gangway ladder to board the steam cutter for the coal sheds ashore, Mulvey, grinning greasily, said to him:

"You see what you git, matey, for takin' my advice and writin' to the seckeretary o' the navy? If you hadn't done like what I told you about that, where would you be? Moilin' and toilin' and sweatin' and stewin', in a suit o' gummy dungarees, with one o' them demitasse spoons with a wooden handle, down in them choky, gaspy bunkers, diggin'—"

"I can see how overjoyed you are that I'm back in my old mess, Mulvey,"

said Danforth, unable to resist the sardonic note when he saw the fat cook's animus peering out of his beefy eyes.

"Tickled foolish, matey," replied Mulvey, out of hand. "So tickled that I'm thinkin' about puttin' a silver lovin' knife alongside your plate the first time you sit down with your old mess."

A better word awaited him at the break of the gangway, where Mullen, the moon-faced marine, was on post.

"Swingin' from your old hook again, I see, yeoman," he said, stopping Danforth at the gangway to congratulate him. "Here's lookin', and many of 'em, on that, matey." Then he grew whisperingly mysterious. "But if the luck should break agin' you, bo, before the end of the cruise, and you should land in the brig again—there's never no tellin' about these things—you know where there's a no-good bum of a sea soldier that's got a key stowed away that'll always stand by to unlock you at wrists and ankles after pipe-down goes at night, don't you?"

Danforth went ashore with the kindly words of the humble, decent-souled chap in his ears, and he was governed by a new light, filled with a new sense of gratitude, mingled with an insistent feeling of self-reproach. The two best friends he had in that ship's company were, first, an officer whom he had suddenly and persistently misjudged, and, second, a helpful, kind-hearted poor devil of a marine recruit on whom, up to the time he had been cast into the bunkers, he had never wasted more than a casual word. But he would "make good" to his friends now! He "had the angle" at last, and would know how to direct his play!

He spent all of that day and all of the next forenoon weighing coal, in company with the equipment yeoman, at the sheds ashore in Honolulu, and again the men worked frenziedly at the coaling. By this time nearly all of the men of the ship's company for'ard were serving overtime; the enlistments of most of them had expired during the quarantine period. It was now late in February, and they had been expecting to be paid off in mid-December.

Danforth, whose cruise had begun in San Francisco Harbor instead of on board the receiving ship *Independence* at the Mare Island Navy Yard above San Francisco, where the bulk of the crew had shipped, was one of the few men for'ard whose enlistment was not to expire until early in April.

No wonder that this overtime crew, serving on board a ship whose homeward-bound pennant already had been stowed on one occasion, broke into a groan of stark misery when the next calamity broke upon them, just as the ship was all ready to up-anchor for a quick run to San Francisco.

The officer of the deck was standing by at the door of the skipper's cabin to get the word. The black gang were at their stations below, doing jig steps in engine-room aisles and on furnace-room decks and even in the bunkers. The deck hands were waiting for the officer of the word to nod to the gangway bo'sun's mate, the nod to be followed by the long, shrill blasts on the bo'sun's mate's pipe and his hoarse, impressive bawl:

"Al-l-l-l ha-a-a-ands up anchor!"

There was a delay. The officer of the deck looked anxious. The men shuffled about the deck, nervous with anxiety for the big "home" word. The men of the black gang, waiting below for the signal to start the capstan engine, gnawed their nails.

The telephone line between shore and ship had not yet been cast off, and the marine sentry at the skipper's door heard the commanding officer telephoning. Presently the marine mail orderly was summoned to the skipper's office in a hurry. The steam cutter, all ready to be hoisted, was called away, and the marine mail orderly was carried ashore. He hurried to the Honolulu cable office, got the cable message, news of the arrival of which had been telephoned off to the skipper five minutes before the "up-anchor" command was due, and hurried back to the ship in the cutter.

It took the ensign who acted as skipper's clerk a quarter of an hour to unravel the code cablegram from the navy department in Washington. Then the

skipper appeared at his office door, and spoke a few words with the executive officer, who looked intensely gloomy—but no more gloomy than the skipper himself.

The marine on post at the skipper's door caught the word: "Buenaventura." He sidled for'ard to the gangway, unshipped the morsel, and sidled back to his post on the commanding officer's door.

Inside of three minutes the rumor was all over the ship, a low and aloft, from stem to stern—the *Tacoma*, instead of steaming for San Francisco, had been ordered to Buenaventura, a miserable little tidal-wave-afflicted port on the west coast of the United States of Colombia. The men moaned in acute anguish.

Ship's rumors usually are ship's lies, fabrications of the purest ray serene, the inventions of dismal humorists. This one was the sad exception to that rule. It was as true as any call to mess. It had the promptest confirmation.

"Haul down the homeward-bound pennant, and stow it," disgustedly ordered the officer of the deck, addressing the quartermaster's mate.

"We're not for home, then, sir?" inquired the quartermaster's mate, in a tone muffled with misery unspeakable.

"No," chopped the officer of the deck in reply, as husky of tone, in his own savage discontent, as the petty officer. "We're for the west coast of the United States of Colombia. Some measly sort of a little shindy, involving a bunch of comic-opera revolutionists and some hobos of worthless Americans who don't know how to mind their business, has broken loose down there, and we're to go to Buenaventura to 'guard American interests.'" The hot-headed young officer of the deck came to a stop from sheer wrath. "Why didn't some of you fellows," he broke out after the pause, "cut that blasted cable!"

He didn't mean that, of course, being an officer and a gentleman and a sworn guardian of civilians' interests and property, but an officer with a wife and four young children back home whom he has not seen in more than three

years, and an officer who, in addition, has twice happened to have the deck when the command to stow a home-ward-bound pennant had to be given, is liable to say many things that he doesn't officially mean, even in addressing a quartermaster's mate with a jaw all but dragging on the deck from sheer, ineffable anguish of spirit.

The orders for Buenaventura were speeding orders. The "All hands up anchor" word was passed, but the men went about getting the mudhook up and lashing it as if the anchor had been the decaying frame of a deceased shark.

"Steady, men—act alive," the "first luff" addressed the hands at quarters when the ship was under way that evening on a lonely Pacific track. "We'll make Home Haven some time, it is presumed," smiling bitterly. The men would have liked to believe him, but they couldn't.

Speed orders or none, the *Tacoma's* bottom was foul from long cruising in tropical waters, and it took her more than two weeks to steam from Honolulu to Buenaventura, a steamily humid little port where, for nearly a month, the men for'ard, denied all beach liberty on account of "a situation of unrest ashore, which might cause complications," panted and sweated under the unflapping awnings, the ship ever rolling in the trough of the huge swells which make that unprotected harbor dangerous, and with full steam up all the time for the seaward run in case of a blow.

A guard of marines was sent ashore to "protect" the United States consulate, which obviously required no protection; the consulate was visible from the ship, and not a soul except the disgusted marines was seen around the building from sunrise to sunset.

The officers swore silently when they were not yawning perilously. The men for'ard snuggled up to the ship's painter, to wheedle that stolid petty officer into letting them have extra alcohol to mix paint for their cleaning stations—any kind of a drunk being, in such mournful circumstances, preferable to none at all. The men to whom shellac

was served out to shellac the berth deck had to be watched narrowly by the "Jimmy Legs," to prevent them from scientifically draining the alcohol from the shellac and trickling the same into their thirsty midriffs, with the aid of black coffee from the galley to make the murderous compound decently palatable, if scandalously injurious, to the human system.

One day during the final week of this dispiriting and wholly unnecessary wallowing in the harbor of Buenaventura, the assistant engineer poked his head into the log-room door, in passing to the wardroom.

"I wonder, Danforth," he said reflectively, his eyes twinkling, "if we'll make the California beach in time to see those daughters of ours nicely married off?"

When, finally, after the return on board of the mail orderly one afternoon, more than a month after the anchoring in Buenaventura Harbor, the officer of the deck once more ordered the homeward-bound pennant to be broken out and flown to the breeze, the men were in a skeptical humor. They would believe there was such a place as San Francisco when they saw it over the side. But this time, expecting nothing, they got that which lay nearest to their hearts.

Up came the anchor, the men below worked like demons to crowd on enough steam to counteract the deterring effect of the foul bottom and bring the ship up to her normal speed; and one morning, just after the hands were piped, the men crowded the rails to catch their first view in more than three years of the Farallons. The ship sped through the Golden Gate long before noon, never pausing until she slid smack-dab into the dry dock at the Mare Island Navy Yard that evening.

Then, and then only, when the long-trailing, homeward-bound pennant fluttered to the deck, to be neatly cut into pieces, a piece for each member of the ship's company, did the men believe that they were really home!

With their ditty-bags stowed for the final trip over the side, they wistfully watched the comings and goings of the

train ferryboats at the dock in Vallejo, across the narrow stream from the navy yard.

The "Jack-of-the-dust," the blue-jacket chore man of the paymaster's room, hustled for'ard, immediately after the ship was docked, and summoned the men to fall into line in the berth-deck alley leading to the pay room for their money; the men whose enlistments had expired were to quit the ship on the following morning.

There was a great packing of bags in the wardroom, where the officers sky-larked like a pack of boys about to be turned loose from school for vacation. They were all to be detached at once for two or more years of shore duty—and sweethearts and wives and children waiting!

The date of the ship's arrival at Mare Island wonderfully fitted Danforth's book, for his time was to expire on the next day. Before the *Tacoma* had been swerved off from Honolulu to Buenaventura by cabled orders, he had been depressed over the thought of hanging about a ship in dry dock at the navy yard for nearly two months before his discharge from the service. This would have involved his making San Francisco only on brief liberty from the ship at such times as he could get away before being paid off at the end of his enlistment. Now, one day after the ship's return, he would be through! And when he went over the side it would be for the last time.

He decided not to inform his wife, by phone or telegram, of his arrival, and he hoped that she would not read of the *Tacoma*'s dry-docking at Mare Island in the newspapers. He pictured himself "walking in" on her and the toddler late on the following evening—he was to get his discharge at five o'clock in the afternoon—and his mind was so crowded with tableaus of happiness that it was only by a keen effort of concentration that he could keep his mind on the difficult job of winding up the log-room accounts.

At nine o'clock on the morning after the ship's arrival, the assistant engineer, in mufti and bag in hand, appeared at

the log-room door to bid the yeoman good-by. There was a sort of grave happiness in his eyes.

"So long, old man," he said, holding out his hand. "Be good." He stopped, and gazed searchingly into Danforth's face. "You're going to be good, aren't you, Danforth?"

The fine joy of self-conquest pulsed through Danforth's mind and heart. He knew that he was going to "be good"! Yet he knew equally well that others who were familiar with his failing were entitled to their doubts, even fears.

"Boasting isn't the cue for me, Mr. Arkwright," he replied quietly. "But I appreciate that question from you. And I'll answer it as fairly as it was put: I've got myself in hand for good and all." He smiled thoughtfully. "You've had a good deal to do with the cure, sir."

"I'd like to think that," said the assistant seriously. "My methods may have been heroic," smiling gravely, "but it would be a satisfaction to think that they'd helped, all the same. You're going to stick; I can see that by the set of your jaw. I shall be wanting to know how you make out again in civil life. Write me, eh? A letter in care of the navy pay office in San Francisco will always reach me."

Danforth rose, and fumbled in the stationery locker above his desk. He brought out the teakwood box containing the two jade cups, opened it, and held out one of the cups to the assistant engineer, whose eyes widened at the sight of it.

"By Jove, that is a jade piece!" he exclaimed. "I tried everywhere in China to get something like this for my baby, but the things, the kind I wanted, were away above my price. You've two of the cups, I see. Where on earth did you pick them up?"

Danforth permitted that question to go unanswered.

"That one," he said, pointing to the cup in the assistant's hand, "is for your little girl, Mr. Arkwright."

The assistant stared incredulously at the yeoman.

"Tut, old man, I'm afraid you think

I was hinting!" he broke out. "No, no, I don't mean that, of course! But, my dear Danforth, how can I let you give away such a beautiful thing as this? It wouldn't be right. Why, the piece is a rare antique, a thing hundreds of years old! I know jade connoisseurs who would almost give an arm for it!"

"I put it aside as a little token for your baby months ago, Mr. Arkwright—not long after that—that affair at the crater's edge," he added, his features wreathing reminiscently. "A token of your squareness to me; that is, if you'll accept it from me for the mother and the baby."

The assistant engineer, stepping into the log room and past the yeoman's chair, gazed out of the open port.

"The mother died when the baby was born, Danforth," he said, in a low tone.

The yeoman gripped the arms of his chair. The officer had never told him that! And this man, carrying that kind of a burden in his heart, had nevertheless taken the pains to rouse him, Danforth, to a sense of the duty that he owed to himself no less than to those who loved him—his wife and baby—*his* wife that lived and awaited him in happiness! Danforth was glad that the officer was gazing out of the open port. It gave him a needed chance to get himself in hand.

"I'll take the cup to my little girl," said the officer, turning from the port after a while, "and thanks no end for the thought that prompted you to send her the gift. Good-by."

The two men clasped hands, and the assistant engineer, picking up his bag, disappeared down the berth-deck alley.

Danforth watched him as he went. "A regular man, and the best friend I ever had," he thought, suddenly lonesome.

The sense of lonesomeness, mingled with his aching desire to clasp his own in his arms, urged him to frenzied efforts to finish up the log-room business so that he would be ready to leave the ship at five in the afternoon. He clung to the books with desperation, ignoring the summons to mess, and forcing him-

self to give no heed to the distracting air of departing jollity among the men of the ship's company. But he came upon half a dozen baffling snarls in the accounts. It was only by a supreme effort of concentrated effort that he stuck to his task until nearly eight o'clock at night.

Then, the books all straightened out, he drew his "pay-off," something more than a thousand dollars, at the paymaster's office, rigged himself in a neat civilian's suit that he had had made by a Chinese tailor in Honolulu in anticipation of this final day of his service, packed his bag, and stepped into the steam cutter for the short spin over the stream to the ferryboat at Vallejo.

The ferryboat pulled out of her slip just as the steam cutter was maneuvering for her landing, and Danforth, in a misery of disappointment, was obliged to kick his heels on the ferry dock for two hours before another boat was scheduled to start to make the train connection for Oakland. That would make it ten o'clock at night before he even started from Vallejo. Then the ferry ride, the changing for the train to Oakland with the chance of missing connections there, and the ride on the ferry from Oakland to San Francisco—Danforth had need of all the patience he could muster!

Already his mental picture of "walking in" upon wife and toddler early in the evening was shattered; he reflected now, with a start of anxiety almost humorous, that the baby would of course be sound asleep in bed long before he reached San Francisco, and would have to be awakened, probably in a cross humor; and he had the man's dread of an awakened baby!

But there was no help for it. He had to wait for the ten-o'clock boat. Then, as he had gloomily anticipated, that boat missed connection with the train for Oakland, and he had to wait an hour for another train. The train that he finally stepped aboard had come a long journey, being an overland train, and, midway to Oakland, came to a dead halt for nearly an hour on account of an engine "hot box." Thus did "the

innate depravity of inanimate things" baffle, at the very end, this man striving, in a tumult of love and anticipation, to clasp those that were dear to him to his heart.

When, hours past midnight, while vague, orange-hued signs of dawn were streaking the calm skies, he finally stepped on board the ferry at Oakland, he could have fallen on his knees on the deck and offered up a *Te Deum* rapturously, collapsedly grateful was he that now, at last, he was on the last leg of his long, long journey to his loved ones.

No sooner had he stepped eagerly, bag in hand, from the ferryhouse on the San Francisco side, than the ground under his feet began to rock dizzily, and his ears were filled with a deep rumbling as of thunder infinitely remote.

The great earthquake was just beginning.

CHAPTER VI.

Danforth was crossing the street from the ferryhouse, and in the middle of the cobbled pavement, at the instant the earth swaying began. His sea legs served him in good stead; otherwise he would surely have fallen. All of the other ferry passengers, a dozen and odd sleepy-looking men and a woman with a baby, who had emerged with him from the ferryhouse, went down on the cobbles at the first sickening upheaval. They fell in queer, sprawling postures, like children learning to walk, and, at first, their faces wore expressions of intense surprise. One man, a laborer carrying a pick over his shoulder, appeared to be filled with quick resentment.

"Would yeez, now!" he muttered, picking himself up and spraddling his legs to steady himself against the swaying, which increased in violence; he stared at the cobbles for a moment, and then, stooping to grab his pick, he started to run, zigzaggedly, circuitously, crazily, as a man struck by a bullet in battle runs to the rear.

"What's this?" Danforth heard an-

other man inquire, as if putting the question to the rumbling earth, in a tone of the most acute amazement. "Why, say, looka here, what's this, now? What's coming off?"

This man had fallen forward with the whole weight of his body on a guitar which he had been carrying by the neckpiece in his right hand. In throwing out his hands to ease his fall forward, the guitar had come directly under the man's stomach, being crushed to flinders with the crackling sound of highly seasoned wood in the process of violent disintegration and with a queer, uncanny snapping of the strings.

The man, getting to his hands and knees, gazed ruefully at the smashed guitar before essaying to pick himself up. "Dammit," he muttered, "that's the second guitar I've smashed in three months, and I paid twenty good bones for it on'y last week!"

He remained kneeling while he gathered the squashed remnants of the guitar under his coat, rose with difficulty to his feet, gazed about vacantly, fell again, this time backward, and, once more scrambling to an upright position, raced howling down the street, his arms flacking, like a man with locomotor ataxia making a final despairing effort to guide his footsteps, or like a small boy rapidly picking his way over the stepping stones of a creek on a "dare"; splintered pieces of his ruined guitar rattling from under his coat to the pavement at every step.

The woman with the baby fell, with the dominant and instantaneous instinct of the mother to guard her child, on her side, sorely bruising an elbow on the cobbles, but holding the baby, clasped frenziedly, uninjured, and still asleep, to her bosom. Unable as unwilling to free her hands from that tight clutch on the baby, she remained in the position in which she had fallen, gazing wildly about, her poor, battered hat of felt fallen over one ear, her hair streaming over her eyes.

Danforth, standing over her with legs spread wide apart—the attitude of the seaman in counteracting the movement of a ship in a jerky cross sea, which the

movement of the earth brought to his mind—started to raise her to her feet. But she shook off his hands, which he had placed under her arms. She seemed to be unwilling to trust herself on her feet again with the baby in her arms.

"Nunno, nunno!" she gasped, in a choked tone. "Leave me be, mister. Don't. I'm afraid. Leave me be, mister, please. I'll get up after a while." Her tone became anguished as, lying all huddled, she clasped the baby still closer. "What is it, mister—the end of the world? For God's sake, please, mister, is it the end of the world?"

Danforth tried to reassure her. A bit of an earthquake, he said; it would be all over in a minute. But it was not safe for her to lie there in the middle of the street. The water-front buildings, which at first had swayed only from side to side with a crunching, rending sound, inexpressibly strange and terrifying, now were bulging forward; the roofs of some of them pushed far outward, with the rakish effect of hats thrust forward on the heads of drunken men. Bricks were falling, and sharp bits of mortar struck Danforth in the face like driving sleet. The crumpling of tin roofs, some of which curled forward and fell to the sidewalk, added to the din.

Danforth knew that he had to get the woman with the baby to her feet. An agonizing hope that somebody competent and clear of head would be taking care of his wife and baby at the same moment swept his mind.

"Come, mother," said Danforth, feeling at the time that it was odd that he should so address her, for she seemed only a disheveled, frightened child, a woman not much above twenty, "let me get you out of this," and, gripping her under the armpits, he dragged her to her feet by main force. The baby awoke at that instant, and wailed fretfully. "Stand like this for a minute," he said to the dazed little woman, still holding her, and widening the distance between his own feet as the vibrations, like the thumping of a racing propeller a thousand times magnified, became ever more violent and nauseating.

"There, that's the ticket. Here, let me take the baby, and you hold onto me."

"Nunno, nunno, mister!" the woman almost shrieked, clutching the now howling baby to her flat bosom with the tightness of a terror unspeakable. "I can't leave go of her. Please, mister, don't take her. She's the on'y one I got. I lost one. I can hold her. I'm all right. I can stand now. Thank you, mister." She stopped mumbling suddenly, a wild thought sweeping her and causing her to begin to shake like an aspen leaf. "Oh—my man!" she moaned, in a tone that seemed to torture her throat and rack her entire under-nourished frame. "My man! What's happenin' to him! He's a dishwasher in a all-night restaurant—and what's happenin' to him!"

"He's all right, mother," gasped Danforth comfortingly.

He was suddenly very sick at the stomach—and he had never once suffered from a moment's seasickness. In his effort to get away from the ship on time, he had eaten nothing since morning mess, and then had only hastily swallowed a cup of coffee. His head began to ache violently. It was a quick, throbbing headache of a kind that he once had experienced after trying to mount the "Crazy Steps," ceaselessly shuttling back and forth, at a "Luna Park" amusement resort. The cobbles were becoming loosened, and seemed to dance crazily in their places like clinkers on the furnace-room deck of a vibrating ship.

"Your man's all right, mother," Danforth went on, after pausing to try to conquer his overwhelming nausea. "I'll guarantee that," wondering at his audacity in "guaranteeing" such a wildly impossible thing, when the world under his feet seemed to be on the debauch of its life. "Come, I'll take you up Market Street—we'll walk in the middle of the street—and maybe by the time—"

"Oh, what's happenin' to Jim!" the little woman moaned, and, shaking off Danforth's upholding grasp, she darted forward, turning staring eyes of alarm on Danforth, as if, instead of helping,

he was endeavoring to visit some harm upon the baby and herself. "Leave me be, please, mister—I'm going to my man! I'm going to my man!" And she struggled down the dim street, pausing every few steps to spread her feet apart when the ground-torturing undulations became unusually violent, and thus keeping to her feet by a sort of miracle.

Danforth started after her, but fell to his hands and knees; and by the time he had picked himself up she was rounding the corner, still advancing joggishly in the middle of the street, a few steps at a time, before pausing to recover her equilibrium, and wailing dolorously for her "man."

The first heavy shocks began to subside slightly as Danforth picked himself up, and he looked around for his bag. He saw it some distance away, slowly making its way down the street. There was a slight incline to the street, and the joggling cobbles were nudging the bag down the slant. There was something sinister, furtive in the effect of the bag thus sliding off of its own volition; the effect of something alive and guilty and slinking away to escape the consequences of an evil deed.

Danforth, walking with more certainty now that the shocks were subsiding into a sort of diminished tremor, as the violent ague of a man gradually gives way to a sharp twitching, grasped the bag, and turned to gain Market Street. He found himself entirely alone on the street. Hoarse shouts and cries were coming from some of the water-front buildings, but all of the passengers who had come with him on the ferry from Oakland had disappeared.

How to reach Polk Street, where his wife and baby were sheltered at the boarding establishment conducted by the wife's mother? He turned rather madly into Market Street under the propulsion of this problem, the heavy bag bumping against his legs. He knew that this was a devastating earthquake, the "real" kind of an earthquake that nervous San Franciscans, rendered apprehensive at frequent intervals by shocks that did no greater damage than

to inspire horrid prefigurations, had been expecting for years.

Danforth, born and reared in San Francisco, could not remember when he had not heard such grisly prophecies. And here was the great earthquake of the sinister, frowned-upon prophets, shuddering the earth just at the moment when, after weary wanderings over a lonely sea, long waiting, the counting of days, the exercise of a sort of patience and self-repression which he could scarce believe he possessed, he had made his way to within twenty minutes' car ride of the wife for whom he had the new love of a clear, rejuvenated mind, and of the baby he had never yet held in his arms!

Car ride? When he got into the middle of Market Street, a glance told him how hopeless the chance of a car ride now was. The car tracks, in many spots thrown several feet above their normal level, were warped and twisted like pieces of old scrap steel lying on a blast-furnace dump; some of the rails were coiled in the hideous semblance of serpents about to spring.

A square up the street, Danforth saw a car lying on its side, with three or four cut and bruised men being helped through the jagged, shattered windows by the car crew.

Keeping to the middle of the street, he made his way to the overturned car, and helped with the work of dragging the gasping, bloody men—printers from a morning newspaper office who had been on their way to the ferry to get to their homes in Oakland—out of the wreck.

He cut both of his hands badly at the work. The car conductor—in a nervous tremor for fear, as he kept saying, that he would now have a "long lay-off," and he'd only had the job four days—helped him to bind up the cuts with strips torn from a handkerchief. Then Danforth opened his bag, got out a heap of handkerchiefs, and worked with the conductor at binding up the gashes of the printers.

Already the fires had broken out in many of the downtown streets, the great plumes of black smoke quickly

giving way to crackling flames that soon became incandescent.

Danforth, choked by the down-swooping blasts of acrid smoke, started up Market Street. The bulged buildings at the foot of that main artery of San Francisco were tinder for the swiftly advancing flames, and as he trudged wearily over the cobbles he began to feel like a scorpion girt by fire. No use turning into any of the narrow side streets. Most of them already were impassable from the wreckage of the earthquake, and his only safety lay in continuing along Market Street.

At first he had hoped that the devastation might be confined to the water front; be a mere slipping of the made land on the bay's edge. Now he knew that the whole city was one stupendous, warped, twisted, flame-devoured wreck. Each labored step that he took brought to him a more stunning sense of the utter completeness and deadliness of the city's ruin.

The street, as he advanced with the stunned stolidity of despair, of a dying hope which nevertheless gave a factitious vigor to his limbs, became filled with running men, shouting and babbling with incoherent vehemence. They ran without direction, hither and yon, tacking aimlessly and jerkily from one side of the street to the other, with the panic-stricken incertitude of ants shut off from their hill by some staggering catastrophe, such as the sudden implanting of a human foot between their foraging place and their back trail.

A haggard, besotted-looking man of middle age, with wild, bloodshot eyes and weaving, palsy-twisted hands, planted himself directly in front of Danforth between the car tracks. He was drooling from fright, from the nerve-torturing suggestions of a mind inflamed.

"Look here, son," he driveled, staring pitifully at Danforth out of eyes the pupils of which seemed to swim in blood, "tell me this: Is this true," describing an arc of desolation with a jerkily waved arm, "or am I dreaming it all? Quick! Tell me! I've been drinking. I don't know how long—

just drinking, drinking, drinking! I had 'em once before; years ago. Maybe I've got 'em again. Have I?" His voice rose to a sort of shrill scream. "Tell me, man, have I got 'em again? Or is this all true?" jerking his hatless, matted head about like a trapped rat.

"It's all true," replied Danforth, resting his bag for a moment on the ground.

"Thank God!" shouted the man, throwing his arms above his head; for an instant he looked as if he might throw himself on his knees in the hysteria of his gratitude. "Then I haven't got 'em? Oh, thank God! Thank God!" his voice breaking into a choked wail.

"Pretty shaky this morning, eh?" Danforth asked him.

The man, his lips continuing to move in babbling self-communion, nodded jerkily.

"Had a drink lately?" Danforth inquired.

"No, no!" the man croaked hoarsely. "Not since last night, when they threw me out—threw me out—threw me out!" His voice rose and fell whiningly, like a child complaining. "Oh, for just one little drink—just a drop! But there isn't a chance—not a chance, not a chance, not a chance!" His reiteration of phrases suggested a mind in the very moment of toppling.

"Wait a minute," said Danforth. He bent over his bag, released the catches, fumbled, and brought forth a fresh bottle of fine French brandy, with the silver foil still intact around the undrawn cork. The shattered man's red eyes protruded with a horrible wolfishness at the sight of the bottle. Danforth drew the cork with the corkscrew of his pocketknife, and extended the bottle to the palsied derelict. The man's outstretched hand was trembling so violently that he came perilously close to dropping the bottle on the cobbles.

"Drink what you want of that," said Danforth. He had never been so near the brink of the horrors as this man, but he had been in deadly case for the actual need of an unobtainable drink. "You need steadyng."

The bottle made a rataplan against the man's teeth as he applied it to his twitching mouth. He took half a dozen long swigs, pausing between each gulp to emit a groan of enjoyment that approached a sort of anguished ecstasy. Half the contents of the bottle had disappeared when finally he lowered it from his lips and gazed at Danforth with a drawn smile of flickering vacuity. Danforth recorked the bottle, and replaced it in his bag.

"None for you?" asked the man, his red eyes wide with wonder.

"No," replied Danforth. "I've had mine."

"Had it?" asked the man puzzledly.

"Yes—more than my share," said Danforth. "Not recently. Some time ago. It had me pretty well gripped. And so I'm through."

The man pointed a soiled finger at the bag.

"But you're toting it around with you," he said.

"Yes," said Danforth. "As a reminder. To look at and consider what it did to me. I've kept that bottle in the desk of my office—office at sea—for a long time; just to look at, odd times, and reflect on what the stuff did to me. Sort of a try-out for myself." He smiled grimly. "I've won so far. And I'll always win. Good-by."

He picked up his bag, and trudged on.

"Say, do you know that you're good people?" the derelict called after him, in a quavering voice. "Good people—good people—good people—." And the words died away in a kind of wondering, incredulous whimper.

At the intersection of Sansome Street a milk wagon filled with noisily clanking cans, the milk jetting from the mouths of lidless cans, whirled by directly in front of Danforth. The wagon rocked from side to side on the rough cobbles; the driver, a pink-cheeked man with an unflourishing little towy mustache, was crouched in his seat, staring wildly ahead.

One of the cans of milk fell over the tailpiece of the wagon with a clang just in front of Danforth as the stam-

peded driver whipped the pair of horses to urge them across the twisted car tracks.

Danforth called after the driver, who had not heard the clangor of the dropped can as it struck the cobbles. The driver pulled up. Danforth pointed to the rolling can. The driver appeared to be in more than one mind as to whether he should leave the can where it was. Danforth decided that issue for him by picking the can up and replacing it in the back of the wagon.

"Will you give me a bit of a lift?" Danforth asked the driver. "I'm trying to make Polk Street."

"G'lang!" barked the driver at his horses, whipping them up. He turned his head around to bawl back at Danforth: "How th' —— can I give yeh a lift? Don't yeh see I got this milk t' d'liver? An' I'm late now!" And the wagon rocked and swayed down Sansome Street. Danforth picked up his bag again, and toiled on.

At the corner of Montgomery Street, a square above, a Chinaman driving a wagon loaded with vegetables—vegetables that looked oddly fresh and dewy, that made a curious note of bright color in that scene of smoke-wrapped desolation—crossed the tracks in front of Danforth. The Chinaman was guiding his fat white horse at a leisurely pace. He was turning from Montgomery up Market Street. He smiled with the winning and genuine winsomeness of the Mongol at Danforth as he drove by.

"Some shake—some fluh," he said pleasantly by way of a morning greeting—the ever-unconquerable, ever-invincible Chinaman, serene in disaster!

"Ride, Sam?" asked Danforth, in Cantonese; he had picked up a good many words of the dialect on the China station.

"Shule," replied the Chinaman, pulling up. "Shule" was his nearest thing to "sure." "Get in."

Danforth tossed his bag into the back of the wagon, and swung up beside the Chinaman on the seat.

"Plenty heap devil loose this moln'in', eh?" said the Chinaman, unperturbed,

chatty, agreeable; calm with the dauntless calmness of an old, old race. He clucked to his undisturbed fat white horse. The horse broke into a leisurely jog toward Kearney Street.

Their way at Kearney Street was barred by a line of cavalrymen from the presidio, their horses snorting and rearing, fear-crazed by the flames all around; back of the line of cavalrymen were unmounted soldiers swirling from all directions.

"Where d'ye think you're goin' with that wagon, chink?" a lean sergeant in khaki already soiled by smoke and grime, called out from the head of the line of whirling, backing, and pawing horses stretched across the street from curb to curb.

"Palace Hotel—fetch 'em veg'table," replied the Chinaman, pulling up. "Name Foo Sing—leg'lah Palace Hotel veg'table man."

"Why, you fool slant-eye, don't you know the Palace Hotel is on fire?" snarled the sergeant. "Turn back! No gangway for chinks here!"

Foo Sing turned to Danforth with a wreathed smile of polite regret.

"Solly," he said. "No can lide no mole. Solly."

Danforth climbed down from the seat, and got his bag from the back of the wagon. He thanked the Chinaman for the lift that far.

"All li'," was Foo Sing's reply. "Solly no mole can lide. Take cal youself." And he turned the unblinking fat white horse, that seemed somehow to have absorbed some of the Chinaman's unbreakable placidity, and drove at a jog down Market Street.

"Can I get through?" Danforth asked the sergeant.

"Get through? Where to?" was the snapped reply. "Where d'ye think you're going?"

"Trying to reach my folks—wife and young one—up on Polk Street," said Danforth, emerging for a moment from his stupor of despair at the mention of them. "I'm a man-o'-war's man. Just off a cruise."

The sergeant stared at Danforth's clear-cut features and neat clothing;

clothing worn with the "belonging" air that the average man-o'-war's man rarely achieves when he essays mufti.

"Man-o'-war's man, hey?" broke out the sergeant. "Don't hand me nothing like that! You're a juniper! You never seen a man-o'-war except from a dock."

"I went in and came out as a chief petty officer," explained Danforth patiently. He knew that if he did not get through that barrier of mounted men in khaki his chance to make Polk Street was small. As far as his eye could see, the fire was raging. "But I heaved coal in the bunkers for part of the cruise."

"Heaved coal, hey?" said the sergeant incredulously. "Well, you're the dudiest-looking coal heaver I ever seen, and I done a cruise in the navy myself. Let's see your mitts."

Danforth held out his hands, palms upward. The callouses put on the palms by the bunker shovels had leveled a bit after he had got his yeoman's rate back, but they still were unmistakably hard callouses.

"Pass, matey," said the sergeant, after one glance at the palms, and he beckoned to the troop back of him to open ranks. "You've done your trick in the bunkers, all right. But say, you'd better stow that bag somewhere. They're rounding up looters up yonder," waving his gauntleted hand toward the swirling lines of soldiers back of the cavalry barrier, "and you don't want to have one o' these bums o' foot soldiers take you for a looter and stick a bay'net in your pelt."

Danforth had not thought of that. But he thought of it then, and again very soon after the sergeant's warning, when, cutting away to the right from Market Street with the hope of making his way around the soldiers who seemed to be massing mainly on that chief thoroughfare of the city, he progressed slowly, beginning to feel the wearying, shriveling effect of the heat from the burning buildings, and walked into another barrier of mounted soldiers at Union Square.

Trampling the grass of the square back of the soldiers, Danforth saw a

gang of slouching, smoke-blackened men of ruffianly aspect, in the act of being herded near the center of the square by a ring of foot soldiers with fixed bayonets. Some of these men were growling their protestations of innocence, with the loot protruding from their pockets in plain sight. Others were glancing around furtively, hopelessly, for chances to escape from the gleaming ring of bayonets.

"Y'ere lucky not t' be shot on sight, y' skunks!" Danforth heard the corporal in charge of that herding detachment say to one of the rounded-up men inside the cordon of steel. "That's what the orders'll be before sundown, y' can gamble on that." A true word from that corporal—the order to shoot looters on sight was passed to the soldiers long before sundown of that first appalling day.

"Here, what are you doing with that grip—you there!" Danforth heard a sharp, youngish voice demand; turning, he saw a very young lieutenant of cavalry—so young that he manifestly was a newly joined "shavetail" perhaps direct from West Point—trying to manage his rearing horse with one hand while he pointed with the sternness of the very new and therefore the very undiscriminating officer to his bag.

"My own grip, lieutenant," said Danforth, dropping the bag. At another time he would have smiled at the youthful cockiness of the little officer on horseback. "I'm trying to get home. Been on a journey."

"Here, file of the guard, grab this fellow!" squeaked the young officer, and one of the dismounted cavalrymen stepped forward, and took hold of Danforth. "If he isn't looting now, he will be!"

"Just a minute, if you please, lieutenant," said Danforth, obliged to shout his words above the din to make himself heard. "I am no looter. I'm just out of the navy, and if you'll look into my bag you'll see that there's nothing there but my own gear and—"

"Take him back!" shouted the officer to the cavalryman, who had hold of Danforth.

"Good heavens, man," Danforth exclaimed hoarsely, "I've got a wife and baby less than fifteen blocks from here, and—"

"Back with him!" bawled the "shavetail" officer, in his peremptory, high-pitched voice, and another dismounted man took hold of Danforth at the other side. Danforth, picking up his bag, fell into step with them as a matter of marching habit. Two minutes later he was thrust through the ring of bayonets, held for looting, and surrounded by a cursing, scoundrelly scum of sure-enough looters.

CHAPTER VII.

The square, in the early hours an oasis, was soon so begirt by fire as to become untenable even for guarded looters, much less for refugees from the encircling terrors. First, under escort of a troop of cavalry, the refugees, a motley, half-dressed, wholly unnerved clutter of men who stared stonily at all of the multiplying incidents of devastation around them, were conducted outside the burning district and told by the soldiers to go their ways.

When blazing embers began to drop in a steady stream of fire all over the square, a squat mounted officer with a red beard and a pair of keen eyes, after surveying the corralléd looters sardonically, ordered that they be escorted to Lafayette Square, and there held at the bayonet for later consideration of their cases.

The little officer with the red beard was General Funston, the oddly unromantic-looking hero of Cuba's war with Spain, the captor of Aguinaldo, and in that very hour the energetic hero of the San Francisco earthquake, the man who, on his own responsibility as commanding officer of the Presidio, had instantly seized the reins of power after the first shocks of the earthquake, declared San Francisco under martial law, and throttled the anarchy which, without such handling, is the inevitable accompaniment of great disasters.

Danforth, who had seen the little general at Manila and at Hongkong, recognized him at once, and struggled

futilely to attract his attention; he knew that he would get justice there; but he was pressed back, literally at the points of half a dozen bayonets, into the guarded gang of cutthroats caught looting; a compact, closely herded assortment of raffish, desperate thieves now almost a hundred in number.

Helpless, dispirited as he had never been in his life before, wrought upon by innumerable dreadful mental pictures of what might very easily be happening, if it had not already happened, to his wife and child, Danforth, lugging the bag, the possession of which had caused him to be sunk in this morass of misery, was compelled to fall into rout step with this sinister pack of human jackals who seemed to have emerged from all the haunts of shadows to batte upon human misfortune, and accompany them under the contemptuous guard of soldiers cursing this kind of duty to Lafayette Square.

When the guarded gang reached the intersection of Leavenworth and Sutter Streets, one of the looters, a huge, sullen-eyed lout with a 'longshoreman's greasy cap perched on one ear, gazed around furtively, and then, hurling himself between two soldiers close to the curb—the soldiers were marching in riot formation—bolted down Sutter Street with amazing speed for a man of his bulk.

"Pink him," quietly ordered the grizzled captain of heavy artillery in charge of this escort. Two of the soldiers pulled cartridges from their belts, slapped the cartridges into their guns with no more haste than if practicing at the target butts, brought the guns to their shoulders, and fired at the same instant. The running man pitched high in the air, and crumpled forward on his face, where he lay without a twitch, forever past the temptation to loot. The soldiers let him lie where he fell; the marching party—soldiers and prisoners—had not even halted. The other looters shuddered and cursed in their throats.

When the outfit reached Polk Street, Danforth, held closely in the middle of the slouching pack of marching prison-

ers, gazed up the street with a heart that seemed to die within him. The whole street was a mass of flames, with great bellying palls of black and ochre-hued smoke sweeping groundward with descending eddies of air, with a weird effect as if, the end of all things having come, the very clouds of doom were swooping upon the stricken earth to make the terror more complete.

A singularly dense black plume seemed, to Danforth's aching eyes, to hang, stationary and not subject to the whirling gusts of breeze, directly over the spot where he located the home of his wife's mother, only a little more than three blocks from where he tramped with the bayonet-hemmed gang of thieves. Danforth, a man upon the rack, forced his way through the guarded crowd to the side of the mounted captain.

"Listen to me, sir," he said, in a voice husky with torment, pointing a trembling hand toward Polk Street. The grizzled captain stared at him curiously, obviously without sympathy; clearly he regarded him as a man as good as convicted as looting. "I am telling the truth, so help me God! I am unjustly held with this crowd." The surrounding looters jeered raucously as he said these words. "I was thrust inside the guard line at Union Square on the order of a lieutenant of cavalry who would not listen to me, because I was carrying this bag. It is my bag. Will you have it opened? It contains my uniform as a chief petty officer of the navy. I was paid off only yesterday. Down this street, only three blocks from here, I have—or had—a wife that—"

His voice failed him. He could not go on. The grizzled captain gave a twist to his mustache. He was more uninterested than incredulous.

"Sergeant," he called to the noncommissioned officer riding at the front of the formation, "how about this man?" nodding toward Danforth. "Was he caught looting, like the rest of them?"

"Presume so, sir," offhandedly replied the sergeant. "Arrested by order of Lieutenant Batley."

"You'll have to take your chance with the rest," said the officer to Danforth. To add to the sickening effect of it, he tacked on a few words of homily. "Looting's bad medicine; you know that, or ought to know it," he said, and he spurred his horse forward in order not to have to listen further.

Danforth, despair crouching upon him like something that could be felt with hands, plodded on with the hang-dog gang of prisoners.

They were herded in the middle of Lafayette Square, which was just outside the lurid line of belching fire. The soldiers surrounding the prisoners leaned upon their arms, and chatted with the catastrophe-dazed civilians who came along and peered with dull inquisitiveness at the looters caught red-handed.

"What'll be done to 'em?" one man asked a guarding soldier.

"Dunno," replied the man in khaki, yawning and stretching, the butt of his gun resting on the ground and the bayonet, upward-pointing, against his chest. "Shot, I s'pose. Looters are bein' shot now on sight."

"Serves 'em right," said the man, walking away. The looters, overhearing his remark, hurled curses after him. He turned, looked scared, and hurried away at a swifter pace.

Danforth upended his bag, and sat on it, his elbows on his knees, his chin supported by his palms, staring blankly, seeing nothing. He sat thus, oblivious of all sights and sounds, for two hours. Then he was roused by a familiar voice.

"So they got you sewed up in a nice, airy brig that ain't housed over this time, hey?" said the voice; a fat, wheezy voice replete with a kind of repressed rancor.

Danforth raised his aching, smoke-dulled eyes. Mulvey, the fat ship's cook, still in bluejacket uniform, though he had been paid off two days before, was standing between two of the guards, the backs of his hands on his hip bones, peering malevolently at him out of red, drink-contracted eyes. Danforth became vaguely aware that other members of his ship's company were

lounging back of the line of soldiers. The end-of-the-cruise revelry of the discharged men had been interrupted by the catastrophe, and they had been driven to the outskirts of the fire-devastated district.

Danforth gazed silently at the drink-swollen jowls of the cook. He needed a friend who would at least identify him and stand sponsor for his honesty in this the worst pass of his life, but he disdained to ask a man of the cook's kidney to say the word that would free him from the cordon of steel.

"Nothin' to say, hey?" Mulvey went on, his congested eyes slitting with increasing viciousness. "Don't like your nice little open-air corral, hey? Too bad. Scan'alous shame. Boo-hoo!" He simulated a mean kind of blubbering weeping. The two guards between whom the cook was standing grinned.

"That guy," said one of the guards to the cook, nodding toward Danforth, "says he's a man-o'-war's man, or was. How 'bout it, old shellback?"

"'Was' is right," pronounced Mulvey, without an instant's hesitation. "He sure was. But he's a deserter. Served aboard my ship. Jumped the ship at Honolulu, and swiped a lot of officers' gear. That's a officer's suit o' clothes he's got on now."

He said it without a blink.

Danforth, aghast at the undiluted fiendishness of this man who had been his shipmate, against whom he had never lifted a finger, suddenly became intent upon the workings of the face of a tall, gangling man who had come up behind Mulvey as the cook glibly exuded his lying words. The tall, raw-boned man, also still in uniform, the uniform now smudged with smoke and soot, was Mullen, the moon-faced marine who had stood Danforth's friend on so many occasions.

Mullen's broad face, as he listened to the cook's lies, was working convulsively, dark with rage; his big, bony fingers closed and unclosed with a sort of nervous but patient puissance. He waited until Mulvey was quite through with his string of direful and really dangerous accusations. Then, with the

same swift movement of the arm that he had employed at the brig door when Danforth was in irons, he caught the cook by one of his fat shoulders, and pulled him square around as a Jack-of-the-dust would manhandle a sack of ration flour.

"Pickin' on a square guy again, hey, y' can o' garbage!" said the marine, straining his words between locked teeth. The cook's jowls turned from motley red to a bilious yellow-white; his beady eyes fluttered and sought the ground. "Stand there," went on the marine, giving him another yank, "until I tell these beach soldiers what a dirty, lying cask o' grease you are.

"Fellers," addressing the circle of soldiers, who grouped themselves more closely around him, a man of their own kind if a soldier of the sea instead of the land, "this filthy swab here," jabbing a hard forefinger a full inch into the cook's fat-infolded neck, "is the meanest-mouthing liar that ever stood in line to draw a government ration. You heard him say that that decent guy sitting yonder on his grip," pointing at Danforth, "was a ship jumper, a thief that pinched a suit of officer's shore duds, and all the like o' that?"

"Yep; that's what he said," replied the two soldiers between whom the chalky cook was still perforce standing, and they viewed the bluejacket out of the corners of eyes beginning to film with suspicion.

"Well," said the moon-faced marine, his loose-jointed frame actually trembling in the intensity of his anger, "that was the measliest pack of lies—lies deliberate and meant to hurt and harm a square guy. I was shipmates with that feller sitting back of you on his grip. He was a chief petty officer on board the *Tacoma* with me; the ship just got back to Mare Island from the China station a couple days ago. That guy—his name's Danforth—is as square as a hatch cover—square all through and all over. He wasn't none o' these sneerin' deck hands that hate sea soldiers. What d'ye s'pose he done for me? Why, he woke me up when I was sleepin' on post—I'd been pickled on ship's alco-

hol before bucklin' on me belt for sentry go—and you fellers know what that would ha' meant if I'd been snagged asleep—'bout two years and a bobtail.

"That's the kind o' guy that Danforth feller is. Ship jumper? I seen him paid off two days ago; and he's got a honorable discharge in his pocket or his grip. Lootin'? That guy? Don't make me laugh, me lips is chapped! What for would he loot? Wasn't I on post at the paymaster's door when the paymaster eases this Danforth guy more than a thousand bucks for his payoff? And that's the kind of dead-square gink this gummy swab here," again jabbing the now quaking cook in the neck with a stiffened forefinger, "is tryin' to keep corralled with his filthy mess o' slumgullion lies!"

The soldiers exchanged glances; instantly the moon-faced marine had finished, they were actuated by a common impulse.

"Beat it, y' skunk!" they broke out in unison; and the toes of half a dozen heavy government-straight brogans of soldiers thudded simultaneously against the protuberant anatomy of the running ship's cook. They booted him all across the pavement to the curb of Sacramento Street; and even after they stopped thudding their brogans against his galley-padded bulk, he kept up his waddling, panic-stricken run down the middle of Laguna Street until he was lost from view in swirls of down-sweeping smoke from the outer edge of the burning district.

When the soldiers thus broke, for an instant, the circle of steel to pursue the cook, Danforth became aware of the searching gaze of a pair of gray-blue eyes bent upon him. The eyes belonged to the little red-bearded general, now afoot. He had been standing unnoticed back of the ring of soldiers grouped around the marine while Mullen was narrating the facts as to Danforth's case. The sentries, returning to the edge of the square from the booting of the cook, looked scared when they saw General Funston, and quickly shouldered their guns and set themselves in chain-guard attitude. General

Funston noticed their nervous glances at him. He smiled, crinkling his caroty beard.

"It's all right, men—you did just right with that fellow; I heard the whole business," he said. "But hereafter, in a case like that, let men not on guard attend to it."

The little general again bent his gaze upon Danforth, who from habit, had stood at attention.

"Have you got your discharge handy?" the army officer in command of San Francisco asked Danforth, in his brittle, businesslike tone.

"Yes, sir," replied Danforth. He produced his discharge—an "honorable"—from his bag, where he found it in the breast pocket of his yeoman's uniform, and handed it to the general, who glanced at it and handed it back.

"You're released, Danforth," said the general. "I'd recommend you to shift from those civilian's clothes into that navy uniform you've got in your bag. Uniforms are going to have the call here for a few days." This a bit grimly. "And stow the bag somewhere; you're liable to attract too much attention, carrying it. Here, wait a minute; I'll make the lines clear for you, seeing that you've had a pretty unfair dose."

He produced a notebook, and scribbled a safe-conduct on a page of it:

Pass this man, George L. Danforth,
through all lines. FUNSTON,

Brigadier General.

Thus read the scrawl—a piece of paper that many a harried business man of importance, thrust hither and yon by soldiers during those gruesome days of 'quake and fire, would have given a great deal to possess. Danforth saluted, thanked the officer, picked up his bag, and walked through an opened rank of bayonets.

He hailed Mullen, the marine, who was trudging down Laguna Street. The shambling sea soldier turned at the hail, and lounged back.

"I thought you might get it in your neck that I wanted somethin' out'n you, bo, if I stuck around—I on'y wanted to see you turned loose," he explained,

when Danforth asked him why he had not waited.

"Something out of me, man?" exclaimed Danforth, fervid with a feeling of gratitude stronger than he had ever felt for any man before. "You're entitled to anything I've got—all I've got!" He disregarded the marine's deprecatory gesture, and asked him: "How are you fixed? You weren't paid off from the corps, were you?"

"No. I got a eight months' butt to put in yet," replied the marine.

Danforth pulled a handful of gold eagles from his pocket, and held them out.

"Take what you want, or all of it, Mullen," he said. "I can't pay you in coin for some things you've done for me; this thing particularly; but of course you're broke, and I want you to let me stake you." Mullen shook his head, and held up a hand with the palm thrust outward. "We'll call it a loan, then, Mullen," Danforth added.

"No, pal," said the decent fellow. "Nix on that. I couldn't pay it back, and they ain't nothin' I want out'n you. You acted like a buddy to me onct, and that's enough. I got six bits left, anyhow, and that'll get me back to the ship. Got to see if I can make a ferry right away; breakin' my liberty now." And he held out his hand, crushed Danforth's fingers in his powerful grip, and plodded down Laguna Street.

Danforth never saw the moon-faced marine again, but he never claps eye on a man in the uniform of a marine that he doesn't think of the rawboned, gangling, kindly sea soldier with the round, meaningless face, and hope fervently and with a rush of reminiscent gratitude that his hammock is swinging from well-placed hooks on a good ship.

Danforth struck westward along Laguna Street, searching for a shelter, not for a place to rest; he could not do that—though he was more fagged than he had ever been on coming off bunker watch with his ship steaming through a beam-ending storm—with the dire picture in his mind of that black plume hovering stationary, unbroken by the surrounding eddies of breeze, over the

Polk Street house as he had seen it, flame-wrapped and already a mere skeleton of a house, a few hours before.

He wanted merely a place to change from civilian dress into his yeoman's uniform, and to stow his bag. But, as he toiled along, he came upon many hundreds of distressed, hopeless-looking people, men, women, and children, sitting disconsolately on trunks and other effects flung aimlessly in the middle of sidewalks, who needed shelter quite as sorely as he; the obviously ill ones, of whom there were many, far more.

The fire had not extended to the streets through which he passed, but nobody had the least hope that it would not sweep all the way to the Presidio, and the terrified folk had carried the more important of their effects into the streets, pathetically regardless of the fact that there were no vehicles to move the things to a place of safety if the flames continued to sweep in their direction.

Danforth peered keenly into the faces of the women and children as he trudged along, in search of some obscure hotel to which, he hoped, the panic might not have extended.

At length, after nearly two hours of walking, with his way barred by the heaps of furniture and household goods cluttering the sidewalks and often extending right into the middle of the streets, he came to a little third-rate hotel on McAllister Street, many blocks from where he had started at Lafayette Square. Nothing had been removed from this hotel; the front door was wide; and the proprietor, bareheaded, was standing outside, surveying the rolling black pall to the southward, and humming cheerily.

"Can I get a room here?" Danforth asked him.

"As many as you like," replied the bald-headed little proprietor cheerfully. "You can have all the rooms. I'm only waiting for the wind to shift, and if it shifts this way, you can have *my* room!"

Danforth said he would take a chance on the wind; he wanted a place to

change his wearing gear. The proprietor plucked a key from the rack, and escorted Danforth to a decent enough room on the second floor.

"Don't waste time touching the button for bellhops, chambermaids, and the like," the chirpy little proprietor said to him. "They've all vamoosed. I don't blame 'em. I'd vamoose myself if I had any place to go to. I reckon there are not many places left to go to now. I just heard a while ago that New York is gone, and that the Atlantic Ocean has covered up all of that country back yonder as far west as Chicago."

This appalling rumor, fit to stun any imagination and to cause even the jaws of the most stolid to fall, was one of many of its sort that were circulated wildly, and with hysterical protestations of their complete truthfulness, throughout San Francisco during the first two days of the disaster.

Danforth did not believe the direful rumor. But he changed his clothes with nervous, fluttering fingers. He wanted to be back in the streets to begin the search! His utter weariness had made him a bit light-headed, and when he emerged into the street in his yeoman's uniform, he caught himself wondering if—"New York being gone and Chicago almost under the waters of the sea"—after his long, long waiting, the world was really going to come to an end before he held in his arms the child that he had never seen!

Where to begin the hunt? He did not know that at that moment there were two hundred thousand homeless people in San Francisco, but the prodigious difficulty of the search had been borne in upon him in the progress of his long, halting trudge to McAllister Street from Lafayette Square.

He had seen scores of other men peering, like himself, into the faces of women and children flocking aimlessly through the heaped-up streets or seated, with dazed expressions and despairing eyes, in front yards, on steps, on hastily assembled household goods, thousands of them on the bare curbs, their feet trailing listlessly in the ditches. He had

watched carefully, hopefully, but not one of these alert, feverishly searching men, most of them, as he could perceive, hunting systematically, had come upon the women or children, or both, for whom they were looking. Danforth measured his chance by theirs, and, accustomed to look facts in the face, he considered the chance woefully small.

Suppose his wife and little girl had, by some quite possible mischance, become separated in the excitement? Already he had discovered that there were many cases of that sort: a spacious corner of Lafayette Park, where he had been under guard with the looters, was filled with wailing little children who, in the confusion of the escape from the burning district, had become separated from their people, to be picked up by policemen or sympathetic refugees and carried to the square to await, under the care of kindly women who volunteered for these ministrations, identification by their parents.

Danforth would of course know his wife if he caught sight of her on the street or in any of the refugees' camps in the parks, but the thought shot through his mind that probably he would not be able to recognize his little girl, from the pictures he had of her, if, the child having by some accident become separated from her mother, he came upon her.

The little McAllister Street hotel where he had changed his clothes and left his bag was only a few blocks from Jefferson Square, and thither Danforth went first; the hotel proprietor had told him there were hundreds of the homeless ones already encamped in that square. The sun was setting murkily in the sinister, smoke-soiled sky, when, weaving his way carefully, and taking pains to scrutinize every face of woman or child, Danforth went through Jefferson Square.

Several times his heart began to thump wildly when, from a distance, he thought he recognized a certain resemblance to his wife's figure, a certain similarity of profile, a certain turn of the head, in some woman upon whom

he bent his trouble-sharpened gaze. But each time as he drew nearer the woman whom he thus thought he had recognized, he was plunged into disappointment ever renewed and each time more bitter.

The evening was setting in with the usual rawness of early spring evenings in San Francisco, and many of the women in whom Danforth, as the dusk came on, fancied he detected resemblances to his wife, had shawls and coats and even flimsy theater "fascinators"—an incongruous touch amid the misery and desolation!—wrapped about their heads, so that often it was difficult for Danforth to catch a view of their faces.

When, upon coming close to a woman with her face thus hidden from view—some woman who, he imagined and hoped, might be his wife—Danforth still was not certain that his fancy was playing him tricks, he would walk directly in front of her to gain a direct view of her countenance; apologizing for his seeming rudeness by explaining the reason. But there was no need for him to explain.

Many of these women were of the most manifest refinement—women who had been screened and cloistered by the love of fathers, husbands, brothers, in homes now ruined; but not one of them showed the slightest offense when Danforth, and hundreds of other men bent upon the same kind of a quest, walked up to them and peered closely into their faces.

"No!" many of them said to Danforth, shaking their heads and smiling sadly. "I am not she. But I do hope you find her!"

The women thus scrutinized by the searching men were, in fact, encouraged by the thoroughness the men thus exhibited.

"I know that my husband will find me now," one wholesome young matron said to Danforth, adding, with a break in her voice, "if he is alive; I can see by the way you poor, dear boys are going at the work of finding us that, if nothing has happened to him, he is bound to come upon me sooner or later."

Danforth spent more than an hour weaving through the sad little groups of huddled women and children in Jefferson Square; and when he left there, with night coming down cold and raw, and all the wild sky to the southward and eastward swept by leaping flames and garish billows of rolling smoke, a dispiriting sense of the hugeness of his task weighed him down. Physically so weary that it became a matter requiring actual determination to put one foot before another—he had had no sleep for nearly forty hours—he nevertheless had no thought of abandoning the search, or even of deferring it for an hour's rest. He pressed on for Alamo Square, many blocks away, where he learned there was another camp of refugees made up mainly of women and children.

He had an equally futile quest there. It seemed to him that he had never before seen so many women and children together in one place, but not any of them were *his!* In Alamo Square he saw many hysterical meetings between reunited husbands and wives, fathers and mothers and children. These meetings gave him hope, but close upon midnight he was forced to acknowledge to himself that his hope did not lie in that square. He heard that there were hundreds of women and children encamped in the Home of Peace and the Sherith Israel Cemeteries, within the city limits but many blocks to the westward. He walked there through unlighted streets after midnight, only half aware of other misery-stunned men plodding through the darkness in the same direction.

CHAPTER VIII.

A dim, reddish glow, reflected from the glare of the skyward-darting flames and the billowy, fire-illumined columns of smoke to the southward, outlined in sad silhouette the weary forms of the hundreds of homeless ones, mostly women and children, who had sought a night's refuge in the cemetery called the Home of Peace.

A beautiful name for a cemetery,

Danforth thought, but how tragically inappropriate at this hour! The dead lying there were at peace; the living were not. Even those who were trying to sleep tossed and muttered, obsessed by terrifying dreams; many of them cried out in their sleep. Those who were awake talked together in mournful, hushed tones; awed as much by their nearness to the dead as by the pall of tragedy enveloping them.

Danforth trudged along the graveled walks, tiptoeing when he passed sleeping women and children so as not to awake them to a new, piercing sense of their homelessness.

He saw that there would be no chance for him to search for his own here until daylight; the faces of most of them were covered or veiled by the shadows of the night.

"We'll have to wait for morning," Danforth heard a man who had been plodding softly behind him say, muffledly, as if to himself. "A long wait." The man had been wounded by a flying ember, and his head was roughly bandaged with a crash towel; his shoulders were drooping with weariness.

"Yes; a long wait," replied Danforth, trudging on. A wait that would be longer for him, he thought, who already had been waiting so long!

Tired to the marrow, the stupefaction of exhaustion growing upon him so that he caught himself nodding even as he walked, Danforth, near the Dolores Street end of the cemetery, sat down on a grave. His purpose was not to rest, but to try to think; to endeavor to rouse himself, by an effort of concentration, from the trance he was vaguely conscious of having been plunged in for many hours.

Nature sought to assert itself. Sleep pressed upon his dazed senses as with the weight of irresistible hands, but he fought it off successfully by a valiant effort of will, as he had often fought it off while on watch on board ship.

Suddenly he became vaguely conscious of soft, steady weeping—the sobs, gradually tapering down to despair, of an inconsolable child. Danforth was sitting at a place considera-

bly removed from the nearest huddle of homeless ones in the cemetery. The weeping did not come from within the cemetery; it seemed to proceed from somewhere in the darkness on the other side of Dolores Street.

Danforth got up from the grave, and passed quickly out of the open cemetery gate. The diminishing sobs continued, guiding him. The street lamps were of course unlighted, and he had to grope his way by the dim-reflected light of the distant fire.

Even when he crossed the street, and, reaching the curb, stood directly over the softly crying child, he could not make out, so vague was the little huddled heap, whether it were boy or girl. He struck a match. Then he saw that she was a little girl, well under three years old, he surmised, with a pretty, pathetic face; wide, wondering brown eyes; and curls of a glossy chestnut falling to her shoulders. She was sitting on the curb.

Instantly, in the flare of the match, she rose totteringly from the curb, and reached up her arms to him, choking back her spasmodic gasps.

"Told," she piped, her voice pitifully hoarse. "I am told."

Danforth, his heart thumping with a new hope, a foolish hope, he well knew—and yet his wife had big brown eyes! —took the child in his arms and held her to his breast.

"'Told,' are you, baby?" he said to her soothingly. It was the first word of baby talk he had ever uttered in his life, as he reflected with the whimsical catching at details of a strained mind. "I will warm you, little woman!"

He unbuttoned his yeoman's double-breasted uniform coat, and wrapped a flap of it around the shivering figure of the little girl. She quickly adjusted herself to a comfortable position in this cozy place. The covering of the coat and the warmth of the man's body soon stilled the chattering of her teeth, and her sobs became further apart and died away.

"Where is your mamma, honey?" Danforth asked the child. But she was already half asleep.

"G'anma," she murmured. "G'anma." An instant later he knew, by her even breathing, that she was sound asleep.

What to do with the child? All of the Dolores Street houses facing the cemetery were tenantless and wrapped in darkness. The child could hardly have emerged from any of those houses at such an hour of the night—it was close upon two in the morning. If she belonged to any mother camped in the cemetery, surely that mother, supposing the child to have wandered away, would have missed her, would be agonizedly searching for her, and he had passed all through the cemetery and had come upon no mother whose child had wandered away. Obviously the little girl was lost; perhaps had become separated, in the confusion, from the side of a mother passing through the dark streets.

But where to take her? She was alone, surely lost, cold, suffering from exposure. He could not awaken any of the sleeping women in the cemetery, surrounded by their own little flocks, and ask them to assume an additional responsibility. Moreover, Danforth did not want to give her up! Her soft little ringlets brushing his chin, her flowerlike face pressed against his cheek, her breath coming and going on his neck—he did not want to give her up! And what need to give her up, if she were lost? He resolved to care for her, to hold her until she was claimed. That would be his task for the night: to look out for this strayed little one; he could not renew the search for his own until the coming of the daylight.

And he had a bed for her! He started on the long trudge for the little hotel in McAllister Street, where he had left his bag, keeping to the middle of all of the streets in order not to bump into people who, fearing further earthquake shocks, were sleeping on the sidewalks.

As he approached the hotel, he was glad to see the windows brightly lighted. He had feared, on his way, that perhaps the cheery little bald-headed proprietor, following the example of his "vamoosing" employees, might himself have forsaken the house and closed it

up. But the blithe, dauntless little Boniface was not that type of deserter; far from having run away, he was behind the counter, busily engaged in brewing some coffee on a small oil stove that he had brought from the dark kitchen.

"Hello, there, heavy-weather man!" he greeted Danforth, in a genuinely hearty way. "Got company, eh?" pointing to the sleeping little girl.

"'Sh-sh-sh!" said Danforth, a finger at his lips. "You might wake her up!" He laughed at the recollection of that at a later time—at the thought of how early his instinct and solicitude as a father asserted itself by his employment of those warning words: "You might wake her up!"

"By Jove!" said the hearty little hotel man, in a subdued tone, "that's so, isn't it? I wouldn't wake the poor little tot up for a brand-new earthquake policy on my house! Man alive, but isn't she the pretty one? Yours, old man?"

"I wish to God she were!" Danforth exclaimed, in a low tone. "I found her opposite a cemetery, where I went to look for my own."

"Didn't find yours, then?"

Danforth shook his head. He hated to say "No" outright. That foolish thought was still in the back of his mind—and his wife *did* have a singularly fine pair of big brown eyes, even if his own eyes were gray-blue!

"That pretty little lady will be mighty glad of a bed to finish out her sleep on, I'm thinking," said the hotel man, pointing to the utterly relaxed position of the child in Danforth's arms. "I tell you what. Put her in your bed, and then come down here and join me in a cup of coffee. It'll chirk you up. Then you can take any of the other rooms you like to sleep in yourself."

"I'll be down for some coffee presently, thanks," said Danforth, "but I won't want any other room. I'm not going to sleep. I must watch the child."

The bald-headed little hotel man looked at him with a twinkling eye.

"'Watch?'" he said. "Why watch a soundly sleeping child?"

"I don't know," replied Danforth

perplexedly. "But that's what I am going to do."

The hotel man led the way up the stairs to the second floor, carrying an oil lamp—the gas mains throughout the city had been broken at the first shocks of the earthquake—and when Danforth had removed the little girl's shoes and placed her beneath the coverings he held the lamp above the bed so that its light streamed full upon her face; there was no danger of awakening her, for her sleep was the profound slumber of exhausted childhood.

"Beautiful, isn't she?" commented the hotel man, and out of the corner of his eye Danforth saw a wistful expression appear on the little man's ruddy face. "I wish I had mine back again!" he sighed.

"Grown up, are they?" asked Danforth.

"No," was the quiet reply. "They never grew up. There were two of them. They both went at once—diphtheria. The mother went, too, not long after; she couldn't stand it." He paused. "I was a young man then, but I'm getting on now; it won't be so many years before I'll see them all again."

He seemed suddenly to grow older, more lined about the face, with this memory of an old sorrow, bravely borne; Danforth noticed that his shoulders were hunched forward, as if the old heavy weight had been placed upon them again, as he walked slowly out of the room with the lamp.

Danforth bent over the bed to make sure, before going downstairs to share the hotel man's coffee, that the little one was asleep. She was asleep, but dreaming, and murmuring in her dreams. His ear close to her dream-moved lips, he heard her say:

"Papa tummin' home!"

Then she seemed to lapse again into her profound, dreamless sleep.

Danforth stood erect in the darkness, striving, with all of the taut exertion of a man wrestling, to pull himself together. "Papa coming home"—could there be a more natural remark for a child to make, as natural in a dream as

if awake? What innumerable hosts of children, waiting for fathers no farther away than at their places of work, were making that simple remark of anticipatory childhood all the time—the sun had never set upon children making it!

And yet—Danforth knew that he was either keyed up, or down, he could not judge which; weariness and worry, his common sense told him, had made his mental processes far from normal—and yet, if this struggling hope could only be! He almost smiled at his fatuous belief in the thing called “the maturity of chance” in even wistfully hoping that such an impossible thing *could* be; what the gamblers call a million-to-one shot!

“I hope he will ‘come home,’ little girl, wherever he is—for his own sake as well as for yours,” he said, half aloud, bending once more over the bed before he went downstairs.

The little hotel man had been foraging in the ice box, and when Danforth returned to the desk downstairs a baked chicken, as yet untouched by the carving knife, and bread and butter were spread out neatly beside the disregarded hotel register and inkpots and match receptacles, to go with the steaming coffee.

Had Danforth been asked, before descending the stairs, if he were hungry, he would have shuddered at the mention of food, although no morsel had passed his lips in nearly forty-eight hours. But the appetizing aroma of the coffee, and the cheery invitation of the hotel man to “pitch in,” made him suddenly ravenous. He ate not only with a sharp zest for the food itself, but with the thought back of it that he had better be eating while he had the chance, with a toilsome search ahead of him when daylight came, and a whole cityful of shelterless people threatened with famine.

His mental normality returned rapidly under the nourishing effect of the hearty meal and the stimulation of the coffee.

“You’d better be crawling into one of those beds upstairs—any one of them; you’re as welcome, even to the

bridal suite, as the flowers of May—and annexing some few lines of slumber for yourself, against the labors of the day,” the hotel man suggested.

But the four cups of hot black coffee which Danforth had drunk one after the other, with the insatiable zest for coffee of a bodily and mentally weary man who has been long without it, already had banished the heaviness from his eyelids.

He was glad to find himself growing so wide awake, for he could not throw off the idea that his “station”—the sea phrase involuntarily popped into his mind—was at the bedside of the sleeping child upstairs, and himself awake.

“No sleep for me just yet—I’m going on watch,” he said, smiling, as he made for the stairs. “What are you going to do until daylight?”

“On watch below here,” said the little hotel man. “Some poor down-and-outer might stumble in; even some woman or young one—who knows? And it would be a shame to waste this perfectly good half of a chicken and all this bread and butter and stuff. If you hear any talking down here, don’t be worried; I’ll have dragged some wayfarer in to finish up the food.”

Groping his way up the dark stairs to his room, Danforth leaned again over the bed. His little charge was sleeping peacefully. From the embrasure of the window he pulled a deep chair to the side of the bed, and, “on watch,” sat through the remainder of the dark, silent hours, scarcely stirring.

The ghostly morning light, cold and cheerless, was stealing through the windows before the child moved restlessly in her sleep, and then roused into wide-awakeness. Danforth, remaining still, in the hope that she might drop asleep again, saw her eyes rove about the walls and ceiling.

“She will cry,” he thought, “when she finds herself in a strange place.”

But she did not cry. Gradually her gaze rested upon the face of the man seated in the chair beside the bed—he watched her out of slitted eyes, for he was pretending to be asleep. But she obviously had had her sleep out. She

turned to face him, resting a little elbow on the pillow and her cheek in her hand, and thus for a long time she studied him, her puzzled eyes wide with wonderment, but no tears even threatening to film her gaze.

"A very self-contained little lady—God bless her!" thought Danforth, a bit inclined to be nervous under the steady gaze, as a man is apt to be under the clear, penetrating scrutiny of a child. He concluded that it would be useless for him longer to feign sleep, seeing that she was so wide awake, and so, gradually, so as not to alarm her, he opened his eyes.

He smiled as he did so. She smiled straight back at him—an utterly contented, confiding smile of unafraid childhood! Her pluck—"gameness" was the man's word that came before his mind as he considered it—warmed his soul. Not a sign or symptom of fear, or even childish anxiety, about her; perfect adaptableness to the new situation, to her new custodian. Danforth yearned over her, would have crushed her to his heart, had he not been afraid of disturbing her perfect poise, her unique placidity.

He held out a huge, timid hand, resting it on the coverlet; she placed her little hand in his in instant response to this overture, and Danforth caught himself staring at the hand in his and wondering at its softness and tininess.

"How do, sweetheart?" said Danforth; the caressing phrases flowed naturally to his lips, but, whimsically, the wonder shot through his mind what his mates of the man-o'-war bunkers would think and say had they heard him thus speak to the child.

"Do?" she replied, a finger at her lip, and smiling dimplingly again.

"How do you feel, dearie?" he asked her.

With the greatest coolness and candor imaginable, she replied in one expressive word:

"Hung'y."

"Hungry!" Why, of course she would be hungry, Danforth thought self-reproachfully! It was a wonder, he said to himself, he had not thought

in time that she would be hungry on awakening, so that he could have had something all ready for her to eat when she emerged from sleep. He stood up.

"Listen, baby heart," he said to her. "I'll go right away and get you something to eat. You won't be afraid while I'm gone, and you'll stay right here in bed?"

"'Es," she replied, understanding perfectly. He kissed her on the curls, and rushed out into the dim hall and down the stairs to take counsel with the hotel man in this strange, unprovided-for emergency. The hotel man was standing at the front door, looking up and down the dreary street, along the length of which the sleepers were just beginning to awaken.

"That child is awake, and she is hungry!" Danforth burst out, as if relating something incredibly novel and amazing.

The rubicund little hotel proprietor gazed at him, and smiled indulgently.

"Are you *sure*?" he asked, with a good imitation of Danforth's astonished tone. "That's almost unbelievable. Must be something wrong. Impossible that a child of that tender age that's only been through an earthquake and a fire that burns up a whole city and then been shelterless and probably without anything to eat for a dozen hours or so—quite out of the question that a child like that could be hungry. You must be only imagining it, old man."

"See here," inquired Danforth, still breathless over his disquieting discovery that his charge had an appetite, "what—er—do they eat for breakfast, anyhow?"

"What—do— they— eat?" repeated the hotel man, studying Danforth out of twinkling eyes. "What the dickens do you think they eat?"

Danforth shook his head; he didn't know; had no idea, except that it might be something "soft" and of the spoon-victuals kind of food.

"Well, I suppose," he replied, his countenance showing his sharp perplexity, "they've got to have something sort of special and—"

"Very special," put in the hotel man, simulating extreme gravity. "Let me suggest, then, first, the half of a grapefruit, a cereal, a brace of good thick chops, or some country sausage, creamed potatoes, about three poached eggs on toast, a stack of buckwheat cakes with honey, and a little orange marmalade as a chaser, not forgetting two or three cups of coffee. Many a child, my boy, has made a right fair breakfast off a little snack like that!"

Danforth looked overwhelmed with astonishment.

"All that?" he asked, chapfallen. "Why, where on earth are we going to get—"

"You poor ignoramus," the hotel man interrupted him. "Come back here to the kitchen, and we'll see what we can scrape up for the little castaway."

He was a skilled hand at "scraping up," and within ten minutes he had compounded on the oil stove a tempting bowl of milk toast, enriched by a dropped egg. Danforth helped him with minor deals of the job. It was odd to see the two men, both wrought upon by a city's great tragedy and both for the moment throwing off the recollection of their own troubles, fussing around the kitchen making ready a breakfast for a lost child. The hotel man spread a clean napkin on a tray, carefully arranged the bowl of milk toast thereon, and headed for the second floor, Danforth trailing, wondering solicitously if the bowl, which contained nearly a quart of milk and four large pieces of toast, not to mention the egg, would be enough to keep the child from immediate starvation.

Childlike, she had quite forgotten her promise to remain in bed, and was sitting on the top step of the stairs, humming to herself, when the two men brought her breakfast. She greeted them with a succession of coquettish smiles, gave her hand to Danforth to be led back to the room, examined the contents of the bowl with kindling eyes of appreciation, and ate—her partaking manners dainty and pretty—as if she had not tasted a morsel of food since the day of her birth.

The two men, sitting side by side on the edge of the bed, watched her eat with satisfaction, mingled with curiosity, as if she had been engaged in the performance of some unusual and mystifying rite.

"Looks like I've made a hit, doesn't it?" said the hotel man to Danforth. "If this earthquake and fire thing breaks me—and I reckon it will—I ought to be able to get a job as a chef in a boarding kindergarten, eh?"

He went out of the room presently, and Danforth sat and watched the child earnestly to see if she was going to have enough. She placed the spoon alongside her plate with a pretty and convincing denotation of satiety when the bowl was about one-third finished, and Danforth breathed freely again.

"Was it good, baby?" Danforth asked her.

She nodded brightly, and then a slight expression of quizzical protest crossed her face.

"Not a baby," she said. "Little dirl."

"Oh, you're a little girl?" said Danforth, smiling. "Excuse me, please, for calling you a baby."

Her face cleared forgivably.

"My name's May," she volunteered.

Danforth stood up with a bound, and walked over to the window, while she watched him out of wide, curious eyes.

May! That was the name of *his* little girl! He turned from the window, walked over to where the child sat in the deep chair beside the bed, placed his shaking hand lightly on her curls, and asked her in a constrained voice, striving to smile:

"May—what, little one?"

She put a finger to her lip, looked at him puzzledly, and shook her head.

"Do you remember your last name, honey?" he asked her.

But she shook her curls again. She was a very little creature, and last names were beyond her.

"May," she repeated, dimpling.

It was a tragic disappointment for Danforth. But patience was becoming a sort of second nature to him. He

found the little girl's shoes, laced them on her feet, and took her in his arms.

"Come, dear," he said to her, "we'll go—" He hesitated. Some association of ideas deep buried in his mind suggested the phrase. "We'll go bye-bye," he finished.

"Find g'anma?" she asked, snuggling in his arms.

"Find g'anma," he said comfortingly.

The hotel man was at the foot of the stairs.

"Going out?" he asked Danforth.

"Yes," Danforth replied. "I'm going back to the cemetery—the Home of Peace—where I found the little one. Maybe I'll be able to find her people there, now that it is daylight."

The little hotel man softly pinched the child's cheek. Then he had an idea.

"Wait till I get my hat, and I'll go with you," he said. "The hotel business isn't very brisk just now, and I reckon I need the air."

Carrying his crooning little burden all the way in his arms, Danforth, the hotel man plodding alongside him, walked through the sad streets to the Home of Peace Cemetery.

CHAPTER IX.

When Lieutenant Edward S. Arkwright, passed assistant engineer, United States navy, detached from the U. S. S. *Tacoma* for waiting orders, left that ship at the Mare Island navy yard on the day before the earthquake, he found the journey to San Francisco, by ferry, train, and then ferry again, the slowest he had ever known. This, too, despite the fact that the boats and the train traveled with the going clear and no great catastrophe even dreamed of, at their accustomed speed. But Arkwright, on boats and train, found himself urging forward these rapid-speeding water-and-land agents of travel very much in the same way that a jockey urges a race horse. He smiled at the futility of these efforts, but it was a more or less nervous and forced smile.

He was on the last leg of the journey to see the baby that he had never seen,

and his sense of humor in that hour was naturally subservient to a great many other sensations, all of them more moving and vital than mere humor, that were passing through his mind.

He was, for example, picturing, for the ten-thousandth time, the scene when he should first behold his little girl. He decided, also for the ten-thousandth time, that he must hold himself taut and steady for that meeting; that he must not, as he phrased it in the closer recesses of his mind, make "a blubbering imbecile of himself," on peril of working the child into a state of violent and perhaps unprecedentedly moist alarm.

A thread of mournfulness ran through these anticipations. He had never recovered, and he knew that he was never likely to recover, from the blow of his wife's death in giving the little one birth.

He caught himself, now that the long waiting was nearly over, picturing to himself how different it would all be if the mother of the little one were alive; if the two of them were to be waiting for him on the ferry dock in San Francisco, or at the pretty house in Guerrero Street whither he was now bound!

He found it hard to banish such reflections, even though he knew that he was needlessly afflicting himself, on this last leg of the run home. It was not until he stepped from the Oakland ferry onto the dock at San Francisco that he was able wholly to cast this thread of reverie from his mind. Then his heart gave a bound. He had something to live and strive for—the baby was waiting!

In this fevered rush of anticipation, he did not forget his mother, who, at her home in Guerrero Street, had been caring for and cherishing the baby as if she were her own. But the thought of the little one flickered always first in the fore part of his mind. He loved and honored his widowed mother, looked forward to a long, comfortable visit at home with her—but he had never even seen the baby!

He fairly leaped into a cab at the ferry.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"One hundred and ninety-two Baby Street," said the officer briskly.

"What-by street, sir?" asked the driver. "I been in this man's town all m' life, and I never heard o' no Baby Street. What—?"

"Guerrero Street, I should have said," put in Arkwright, grinning sheepishly at his reflection in a panel mirror inside the cab. "And make a record, will you, cabby?"

The cabby smiled knowingly as he lumbered into his seat.

"Baby Street, hey?" he said to himself, as he clucked to his horse. "And he's got the speed mania, too, hey? It don't take no Sherlock Holmes to dope out what's been happening, or is going to happen right soon, at this gent's house!"

Arkwright found even this vehicle far too slow, in spite of the fact that, in turning corners particularly, it was on two wheels a good part of the time, with the traffic policeman scowling frequently at the driver and holding up warning hands.

At length—after many hours, Arkwright thought—the cab turned into Guerrero Street. Long before the vehicle began to slow up at the curb in front of the well-remembered house, Arkwright had the door open and was halfway out of the cab. Rather unreasonably, as he felt, he hoped to see a little girl sitting at one of the front windows, looking at a picture book, if not actually standing on the steps waiting for him. This in spite of the fact that, like Danforth, he had refrained from sending any word that his ship was returned, for he, too, had the grown man's boylike love of a "surprise."

No child sat at either of the wide front windows of the handsome, spacious home of his mother. Nobody, in fact, was visible at the windows, nor was there anybody on the steps. Arkwright was disappointed. Somehow the house looked oddly quiet to him. Even when he raced to the top of the steps, taking three of them at a clip,

and jabbed at the button, he failed to see anybody when he leaned over from the landing at the top of the steps, and peered impatiently through the window.

"Jove! They're slow at answering signals to-day!" he muttered to himself, jabbing the button again.

After a wait that seemed to him interminable, although it encompassed only about ten seconds, Arkwright heard slow, shuffling steps descending the hall stairs and approaching the vestibule with great deliberation.

"That's Hoy Moon, taking his time, confound his good, old Celestial pelt!" muttered Arkwright to himself. "Ship ahoy, there, Hoy!" he called aloud, beating at the paneled door with his gloved hands. "Shake a leg, there, and lower away this deadlight, before I ram through it bow on!"

The door opened. The shuffler was Hoy Moon. His neatly coiled cue had grown gray in the service as butler of the Arkwright family; he had walked Arkwright up and down the floor, and crooned Cantonese lullabies to him when that highly efficient officer of the American navy was teething.

His face creased into countless tiny wrinkles of genuine pleasure at the sight of Arkwright standing, bluff, bronzed, a hearty and puissant man of the deep water, in the door.

"Hel-lo, Hoy, God bless your loitering footsteps!" broke out Arkwright, seizing the faithful old Chinaman by both hands. "It's good to clap eye again on the cut of your good old Chinese-junk jib! How be you? And where, in Heaven's name, is—?"

"How be, Mast'l Edwal'?" said the really aged, but brisk, Chinaman, the wrinkles of delight racing over his face like breeze-driven ripples on an old, sluggish pond. "Glad you home again. Can stay, now?"

"Yes, I can stay—two or three years of shore duty ahead of me, thank God!" replied Arkwright, his eyes never ceasing to rove up and down the hall, his head cocked sidewise as if listening for sounds that he longed to hear. "I say, Hoy, where's—?"

"Look velly well," put in Hoy Moon,

placidly enough, but Arkwright, who knew the old Chinaman so well—as well as any Occidental ever can know a Chinaman—fancied that he detected a certain nervous, fidgety constraint in his manner.

"Come, come, Hoy," he broke out, "we'll have time to burn to talk over how well I look and all that sort of thing. Where's my mother—and where's the *baby*?"

"Solly," answered Hoy Moon, shaking his head and trying to look imperceptible, although Arkwright could plainly see that the old man did not feel that way inwardly. "Velly solly, Mas'l Edwal'. Mothel and baby out town to-day. How can know you come?"

"Out of town!" cried Arkwright. "Where, out of town?"

"Only San Jose," Hoy Moon replied. "Went last night, see mothel's sistel. Back fol tea. Hungly, Mas'l Edwal'? Shall stay lunch? Stay!" His face creased again, this time with a recollection. "Have got chicken potpie. You like! Always did like—like when that high!" holding a withered yellow hand, palm down, about a foot from the ground.

"Yes, I'll stay, Hoy—of course I'll stay," replied Arkwright, and the Chinaman paddled off to prepare luncheon.

It was one of the sharp disappointments of Arkwright's life, but a disciplined man, he set himself to wait—though not without a good deal of nail-gnawing and pantherlike tramping back and forth on every floor of the house.

After luncheon, which he forced himself to eat with assumed relish so as not to seem, under Hoy Moon's solicitous gaze, to slight the wonderful chicken potpie which the Chinaman, calmly shunting the young Chinese cook for that occasion, had himself prepared, Arkwright, roving listlessly and in a tumult of repressed impatience about the place, came upon the baby's nursery in the sunny front room at the top of the house.

Her toys were littered about the floor just as she had left them; some of them

were playthings that he quickly recognized, quaint toys, made for Chinese children, that he had picked up in various ports on the Asiatic station. Among the hobbyhorses there was one that he himself had bravely cantered on a full quarter of a century before. He recognized it by the initials he had laboriously carved on the saddle with his first pocketknife.

He became interested in the toys, sat down and picked them up, one by one, and put them through their surprising tricks. He looked at his watch. It was half past three. He was very tired. The nursery was warm. He stretched out an old-fashioned lounge ranged along the wall at the far end of the nursery. He did not mean to go to sleep; merely to relax and think things over. A flock of images and incidents, some recent, some old, pressed without tension before his mind—a clutter of disconnected thoughts and mental pictures, which gradually dissolved one into another, and he slept.

Slept, and was dreaming that the arms of his dead wife were around his neck, that her tender lips were being pressed against his on the day that she had told him of the precious little burden that the distant ship was bringing to them . . .

"My papa!"

A pair of arms—a very little pair of arms—was coiled tightly about his neck; a rosebud mouth was breathing the words softly in his ear.

He sat up with a start. The electric lights had been switched on. His mother, white-haired and beautiful, her lips parted in an ecstasy of happiness, stood in the doorway of the nursery.

Arkwright held his little girl straight but in his arms, and gazed at her with a devouring, passionate eagerness, the wild love of the elemental, the tribal man surging through him like a torrent; then he crushed her to his heart.

That evening, with an awful tragedy hovering near the city like a serpent poised above a sleeper, was the great evening of Arkwright's existence. He was peering through a new vista of life,

merging his spirit with that of the little girl who had been born during his absence in a distant land.

"She is her mother come to life again," he said in a low tone to his mother at the dinner table.

"Yes, but with your eyes—the Arkwright eyes—of brown, Edward," his mother replied. "Her mother's perfect disposition—and your unconquerable audacity, son! Already she has a fixed habit of taking the world as she finds it."

"That habit will serve her in good stead," replied Arkwright, smiling. Little he knew of the imminence of that "good stead."

He begrudged any minute that the child was out of his sight; was as restless as a caged panther when Katie, the bright-eyed Irish nursemaid, whisked her off to prepare her for bed. Then he sat down beside her crib, and played with her—"bean porridge hot, bean porridge cold," "pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man," all of the old childish games of impacting hands.

Then he took her out of the crib, and rode her to Banbury Cross, smiling to himself, when there flashed into his mind the recollection of how he had ridden the happy-eyed Kanaka baby the same way in the messroom of his ship in the harbor of Honolulu. He hoped that bronze-hued infant was flourishing—that all babies everywhere were flourishing!

This train of thought brought his mind around to Danforth and Danforth's little girl. He told his mother, who was sitting in the baby's bedroom watching it all with happy eyes, about how there had been another man on board his ship—"a gentleman, though he had shipped for'ard, as a good many gentlemen do in our service, for various reasons"—who had returned from his cruise to behold for the first time a little girl—"about the same age as May"—who had been born in San Francisco while the ship was in China.

"He's with her by this time," said Arkwright, looking at his watch. "What a meeting up! The cruise dragged for that man as it did for me; he was as

hungry for this," waving a hand toward the crib, "as I. I'm surcharged with curiosity to see that little girl of his; I've thought so much about her, in connection with coming home to my own baby, that I somehow feel that I've got a sort of kinship interest in her. They live in Polk Street. I'm going to drop over there to-morrow to see Danforth and his baby."

"Why don't you have him bring his little one over here to see May?" suggested Arkwright's mother.

"The ticket!" exclaimed Arkwright. "It wouldn't be right for these two children not to have a chance to play 'come-to-see,' after the way their dads have stewed and fretted over them for so long a time."

The mention of Danforth brought to his mind the jade cup that the yeoman had given to him to bring to the little girl. He raced into his own room for his bag, and brought out the cup—a work of art for the child's grown-up appreciation, although his mother found it exquisite. Then Arkwright dumped the bagful of toys and trinkets onto the coverlet of the crib.

"Dear boy," his mother said to him, her eyes swimming, "don't you know it is already an hour past the child's bed-time, and that—"

"Not sleepy!" the little girl protested, curling her arms around her father's neck. "Not a bit sleepy!"

But she was. Gradually her grasp on a queer little Cingalese jumping-jack relaxed, her eyes drooped, and, even as she murmured again "Not sleepy" in sleepy protest against all of this joy being canceled even for a moment by such a commonplace thing as slumber, she was asleep.

Arkwright's mother turned down the light, and they tiptoed out of the room. In the hall he folded his mother in his arms.

"Are you happy, son?" she asked him, her head against his breast.

"The happiest man the sun ever shone upon!" he replied.

Something in a deep inner recess of his mind reproached him for the words.

"If she——" he added, and stopped.
"Yes, I know," his mother replied.
"But she sees, and she is happy in seeing."

Danforth and Danforth's child still held a place very near the front of Arkwright's mind. After the little talk with his mother, he went to the library, called up, and found out the telephone number of the Polk Street house, and got the number. A refined, gracious woman's voice responded to the call.

"May I speak with Mr. Danforth, please?" said Arkwright in the transmitter.

"Mr. Danforth, or Mrs. Danforth?" the pleasing voice replied, with a certain note of surprise which Arkwright caught.

"Mr. Danforth," he said. There was a slight pause.

"Mr. Danforth," came then, "is not now in this country. He is at sea. But he is expected——"

"Pardon me, madam," said Arkwright, in an agreeable voice, instantly sensing the situation—that Danforth probably had been detained on board the ship by the refractory log-room accounts—"but——"

He hesitated. The thought flashed through his mind that he must not spoil Danforth's "surprise." But it was too late.

"Is he back—*really!*" the words came swiftly, in a tone of excitement.

Arkwright mumbled something indistinguishable in the transmitter. He felt miserable over the thought of taking any of the joy out of Danforth's gorgeous "surprise." He was in a sudden quandary.

"Oh, he *is* back—I know it!" he heard. It was too late then for him to back and fill, and he could not lie to this woman suddenly made happy.

"Madam, I am horribly sorry I've anticipated his return home in this way," he said. "I thought surely he would be there by this time—hours ago, in fact."

"Then he *is* back?"

"Please, please, tell him not to loathe me for having spoiled his 'surprise,'"

replied Arkwright. "I wouldn't have done that for anything imaginable. I thought surely he would be with you and—and the little girl—by this time. He was very busy with the ship's accounts when I left him at Mare Island this morning—very busy, but very happy at the thought of so soon seeing you and the baby. He will be with you very soon now, I haven't the least doubt."

"With whom am I speaking, please?" came the voice at the other end, a certain note of alarm in the tone.

"Mr. Arkwright, an engineer officer of the *Tacoma*," he replied. "And Mr. Danforth's friend," he added.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Arkwright; he has written to me about you, and so appreciateably of late," came the voice, still with the indefinable tone of worry in it. There was a slight pause. "Are you sure, Mr. Arkwright, that he—that he was detained by the accounts—that he——" The voice faltered. "This is Mrs. Danforth." Arkwright understood.

"Just as sure, Mrs. Danforth," he instantly replied, "as I am that I am holding a telephone receiver in my hand. Absolutely! That is forever over, I am delighted to be able to tell you. He is his own man and master again, now and forever! You may rely upon it. I know it!"

Arkwright caught the words, breathed in a whisper: "Oh, thank God for that!" Aloud she said:

"It is fine of you to tell me that, Mr. Arkwright; and when you say it I know I can believe it absolutely. You don't know—oh, you don't know"—there was a little break in her voice—"what a weight it takes from my heart! You are his friend; he has written me that, and I do thank you so!"

"Please don't, dear lady," said Arkwright, profoundly moved. "It is all his own doing. He set his jaw; that is all. He is a man among men, and will always be, take my word for it. And he will be with you, right as a trivet, clear-eyed and happy, in a very short time. Please tell him at what hour I called up. He will understand that I hadn't the least intention of an-

ticipating his return, of course. And will you ask him to call me up in the morning and let me know if it will be convenient to have me drop over and see him and you and the little girl some time to-morrow?"

"Yes—and I know he will be delighted to have you, as the baby and I will," was the reply. "Mr. Danforth wrote to me that you, too, had a little girl you had never seen. How did you find her?"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Arkwright. "Absolutely wonderful! You might know that is how I found her, dear madam! I am in such a trance over her yet that I don't know whether I am here in San Francisco, on board ship at sea, or on duty at the navy department in Washington! Good-by, until I have the pleasure of seeing you—and him—to-morrow!"

How many a telephone receiver was hung up in San Francisco that night with messages and hopes of a "to-morrow" that turned to ashes! Upon the instant of hanging up, Arkwright caught through the receiver the words, called out in a very exaltation of happiness:

"Oh, baby, baby, papa is home, and he—" And Arkwright smiled happily as he guessed the rest.

His mother came into the library just as he had finished telephoning, and he chatted with her until after midnight. Then, observing that she was tired—she would have sat there listening to him and looking at him until morning had he permitted her—he packed her off to bed.

"Are you going to bed now, son?" she asked him, as he kissed her good night.

"Turn in now?" he replied, laughing. "Nothing whatever like it! I am ten thousand times too happy to sleep! I'll drop down to the club for a bit and see the fellows."

He stôle noiselessly into the baby's room, and bent over and kissed her before going out. She turned over in her sleep, murmured "Not teepy," and was instantly in a profound slumber again.

It was a fine, brisk night, and Ark-

wright felt like walking. His service club was on Powell Street, not far from the Academy of Sciences, many blocks from the house in Guerrero Street; but it seemed to him that he got there in something less than five minutes, although he had been walking nearly an hour. There is hardly any walk, anywhere, long enough for the man who treads on air.

When he lounged into the service club, he was met with a roar, and he had a breezy time of it for some hours with officers of his own service whom he had not met up with for years. The paymaster of the *Tacoma*, with whom Arkwright had had the talk on board the ship in Honolulu Harbor about the aloofness of unrecognizing babies when sailor fathers saw them for the first time after coming off long cruises, was there.

"Young lady receive you all right, Arkwright?" the paymaster asked him, when they were by themselves for a moment.

Arkwright, for an instant, did not quite catch the meaning of the question.

"Young lady?" he asked puzzledly, studying the paymaster's face. That genial officer broke into a chuckle.

Then Arkwright understood.

"Oh," he said, flustered and joining in the laugh, "the baby—"

There was a slight rumble under their feet. Arkwright paused for an instant.

"The baby—" he was resuming, when the paymaster held up a hand and cocked his head curiously to one side.

"Wait a minute," he said. "What's that?"

There was another rumble, this time considerably more heavy.

"Street car with a flat wheel, eh?" said Arkwright. "The baby—"

The club building swayed, and the thick green carpet seemed to roll, like small combers getting ready to break on a beach.

"Good Lord, man, it's a 'quake!" broke out the paymaster, in a hushed voice. "And a lot of our fellows asleep upstairs!"

He bounded up the stairs, Arkwright after him. Huge chunks of falling plaster struck them about the head and shoulders as up they went. The building rocked like a careening catamaran. They both beat upon the doors of the sleeping officers with all the might of their fists, shouting.

"Aye, aye!" came back from the rooms, and the aroused men appeared in the swaying hall in their pajamas, and made for the street. Scarcely was the last man out of the front door downstairs before the roof of the club building fell in with a roar which was swallowed up in the mightier roar of many surrounding buildings tumbling into heaps of ruins.

Arkwright had never in his life run from any danger—but now he showed that he knew how to run *to* one! The baby!

He sprinted like a deer down Powell Street, and turned into Market Street like a man running for his life. But it was not for *his* life; it was for the baby's—if it were not too late! The thought of that urged him on. The first heavy shocks were not nearly over, and men were tumbling in heaps, unable to hold to the upright position, everywhere he looked, but he had no time to fall down! No doubt it was his very speed that enabled him to keep his feet; for, as one of his fellow officers, who watched his flight toward Market Street, told him afterward, he "only hit the ground occasionally."

Reaching Market Street, Arkwright hoped that he might be able to find some sort of a vehicle—some night-liner hack of the kind always charterable by the all-night roisterers of San Francisco, which was at that time, however it may have changed since, the one unmistakable all-night town of the entire United States, New York and New Orleans not excepted.

He knew that he would not be able to keep up his pace all the way to Guerrero Street, even if the streets were clear; and already they were heaped high with wreckage, and some of them rapidly becoming impassable. Observing this, he saw that, even if he were

able to find a night-liner, no vehicle could take him very far; and the horses of such hacks as he saw had been thrown from their feet, and were lying down in the shafts or traces, looking pathetically mystified as they tried, under the urging of their spraddle-legged drivers, to stand again.

So, quickly deciding that he would have to run for it all the way to Guerrero Street, he reduced his pace to a swift, steady jog, so as not to wear himself out. There would be work for him to do when he got there, and he must not be winded or fagged.

He had not covered half a dozen blocks on Market Street before he saw that the fires were breaking out. He accelerated his pace again, racing frantically, leaping like a greyhound over masses of débris, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, possessed by but one idea that throbbed through his mind like the working of a jamming piston—to get there!

His heart sank when he saw the devastation among the handsome dwellings as he approached the house in Guerrero Street. Dwellers in these houses were still being dragged into the street by rescuers and herded off to streets less violently stricken and the nearest open squares. He was pierced as by many spears when, staggering breathlessly toward his mother's house, he saw that it was in abject, pitiful ruins, half of the front wall fallen into the yard, and the slanting furniture exposed. There was not a sign of life about the place. Arkwright, scarcely able to stand from the fatigue and breathlessness of his race, was making for the broken front steps when he was hailed.

"You belong there, guv'nor?" a fat, kindly faced policeman called to him from across the street.

"Yes," Arkwright called back hoarsely, pausing. "Do you know if—?"

"Reckon everybody's out of that house, all right," interrupted the policeman, obviously to relieve the inquirer's mind at once. "An old Chinaman living there got 'em out right after the first shock—oh, half an hour or more

ago, I expect. Were they an old lady with white hair, and a little girl, and a girl about eighteen or twenty that looked like she might be a nurse for the young un?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Arkwright, his voice breaking in a very hysteria of gratitude. "You are sure that they all got out?"

"Sure's you're a foot high, guv'nor," replied the policeman cheerily. "I was right in front of this house, pounding me beat, when the thing first busts loose. Didn't appear to me like it was more than half a minute before that old Chinaman—looked like he might be a butler or cook or something in there—came out the front door with the little girl in his arms, and the old lady and the girl that looked like a nursemaid following right after. Oh, don't worry none about that—they're out all hunkydory. Didn't I hold the little girl in me arms meself while the old chink raced back to be sure that the old lady and the nursemaid were sure to get down the steps in time?"

Arkwright made a vow in his heart, then and there, that, when the time came for Hoy Moon to die, he himself would take the old Chinaman's bones to China and see that they got a fine, reverential interment among the bones of his ancestors!

"Which way did they go, did you notice?" Arkwright asked the policeman. But the policeman hadn't noticed; had been too busy watching the escapes of other people from surrounding dwellings.

Like many thousands of other men, Arkwright spent all of that long first day of the disaster ceaselessly searching the streets and parks for his dear ones. He covered almost exactly the same ground in his quest that Danforth covered; no doubt the two men had passed each other during their respective searches, but they had no eyes except for the women and children they came upon. Arkwright's mind was more at ease than that of Danforth; he at least knew positively that his mother and little girl were safe, somewhere; that

they had escaped the tumbling ruin of the home and the fire that, about the middle of the first day, swept Guerrero Street and left it a charred ruin a great part of its length.

But his ease of mind was, at best, only comparative; and as the officer toiled from one park to another, peering into thousands upon thousands of faces of women and children, and never finding those he was wild to come upon, and black night falling upon his unsuccessful quest, despair grew up in him like something not only palpable, but fibrous.

He reached Franklin Park late at night, hoping that he might find his little party of refugees there. But the huddled homeless ones there were mostly asleep in the darkness, and their faces could not be seen. He threw himself down, and waited for daylight. Then he made a systematic search. It was futile. He heard some of the other searching men say that there was a great crowd of women and children at the Home of Peace Cemetery, which was not many blocks away. Arkwright joined the weary procession of men trudging in the middle of the streets toward the cemetery. On the way he overtook a petite, pretty woman, a young-looking mother with big brown eyes, carrying a sleeping, robust-looking little girl in her arms.

"Will you let me carry the child a bit of the way for you, madam?" he said to her. "That is, if you are going, as I am, to the Home of Peace Cemetery."

Arkwright had the face and bearing of a man whom any woman would trust on sight in any contingency; the pretty little mother relaxed her hold upon the little girl, and Arkwright took her into his arms. The child awoke as he did so, and gazed at him wonderingly out of big, gray-blue eyes.

"You my papa?" she asked him.

"Hush, dear," the little mother said sadly. "We are going to find papa now."

"My papa rides on big boat," said the little girl to Arkwright; loquacious after sleep. Arkwright looked into the child's face, and smiled.

"So do I, little one," he said to her. "I only got off a big boat two days ago, and found a little girl just like you that I'd never seen before—and now I've lost her already."

He heard a gasp from the little mother; she was gazing at him with a startled face.

"You are Mr. Arkwright!" she exclaimed, a trembling hand on his sleeve.

As startled as she, he nodded.

"Oh, thank God that I've met with somebody who at least has been with him lately!" said the little woman, in a broken voice, bursting into tears. "I am Mrs. Danforth—and he never reached home!"

Naval officers, more than other men, are familiar with the smallness of the world. But Arkwright had no time to be amazed over this marvelous exemplification of that fact. They had reached the Church Street entrance to the Home of Peace Cemetery. Arkwright, still carrying Danforth's little girl, felt somebody pluck at his sleeve. He whirled. It was Hoy Moon, who was staring perplexedly at the face of the child in his arms.

"Where you get, Mas'l Edwal'?" the Chinaman asked Arkwright, pointing to the little girl. "Not Missy May. She lun away. No can find."

Arkwright's mother, right behind Hoy Moon—they had seen him from the cemetery gate approaching with the little girl in his arms—appeared before her son's astonished gaze. Her features were drawn with distress, her eyes red with weeping.

"Quick, mother!" Arkwright appealed to her in a low, tense tone. "Where is she?"

"If only I knew!" she replied brokenly. "She was with us—Hoy Moon and I—safe and sound last night. Hoy Moon left the cemetery for a moment some time after midnight. She was sleeping under the fold of my cloak—Katie, the nursemaid, left us early yesterday to search for her people. I drowsed with the child in my arms. Hoy Moon, when he returned, aroused me, pointing to the empty fold of my cloak. May was gone; she had awak-

ened and wandered away while I dozed. But she can't be far away. We shall find her—we *must* find her!" And the homeless, weary old gentlewoman, wrought upon beyond her strength, burst into a torrent of repressed weeping.

Arkwright, still holding Danforth's little girl, patted his mother on the shoulder with his free hand, and spoke consolingly to her.

"We'll find her, all right, mother; don't worry," he said.

But his words, spoken to soothe his mother's distress, were more sanguine than his hope. Still, miracles were happening. Had he not come upon Danforth's wife and little girl ten minutes before? He tried to accept that as a good omen. His little girl could not have strayed very far. But in what direction? Which way to turn to start a new search for her?

CHAPTER X.

It was only about an hour after daylight when Danforth, carrying in his arms the crooning and perfectly self-contained little girl, left the hotel in McAllister Street, the stout, short-legged hotel man waddling wearily at his side.

"You're taking the long way, aren't you?" said the hotel man, when Danforth, coming to branching streets, chose the turn to the left.

"Am I?" said Danforth. "Then guide me, will you? You know the way?"

The little hotel man gazed thoughtfully at the ground.

"Yes, I know the way pretty well," he replied, after a pause. "I've been going to the Home of Peace Cemetery every afternoon, rain or shine, for a good many years now. Take flowers there. And just sit there, kind of hoping that they'll come and whisper to me. But of course they never do, although sometimes I imagine they do. They're buried there—"

They trudged on in silence, except that the little girl kept up her subdued, contented crooning.

They entered the cemetery at the Dolores Street gate. Many worried-looking men, searchers, were entering and emerging from the cemetery at that end. As they got within the gate, Danforth bent his gaze to scan the faces of the women and children, most of whom, not long aroused from sleep, still were sitting disconsolately about on the graves and on the grass between the mounds, themselves pathetically scrutinizing the countenances of the men entering the cemetery.

Suddenly, for all of his absorption in this face-scanning task, Danforth became conscious of the sound of a familiar voice not far away. It was the voice of a man, asking a question as to a direction. He raised his eyes to look at this speaker. He came to a dead halt in his slow progress through the aisle of the dead, crowded with the living. The little hotel man glanced up at his face curiously.

"It's good to see somebody I know, Mr. Arkwright," Danforth, raising his voice above the hubbub, called out to the man whose voice he had recognized.

Arkwright, his clear-cut face more lined than Danforth had ever seen it before, suddenly turned from the man of whom he had been asking a question, and caught Danforth's eye. An expression of mingled amazement and pleasure quickly drove the intent, worried look from his face.

"Danforth—shipmate!" he exclaimed, fairly bounding toward Danforth with extended hand. "Of all the men in the world that I wanted to see, here you come springing out of the ground!"

Arkwright had been so intent in staring delightedly into Danforth's face that he had not noticed the child Danforth was carrying. The child, however, with very wide eyes of brown, was examining Arkwright's countenance wonderingly. Recognition and then doubt flickered alternately in her absorbed gaze.

Now, however, she looked convinced. She squirmed in Danforth's embrace to get her arms free. Then she held her arms out to Arkwright.

"My papa!" she breathed softly, dimpling and gazing squarely into his eyes to catch his flash of recognition.

Arkwright's eyes suddenly were removed from Danforth's face and focused upon the little girl holding out her inviting arms. His face went livid with the shock and the utter, supreme happiness of it.

"My baby!" he gasped.

His arms shook so violently when he reached them out to take her from Danforth that he had to crush her tight to his heart to hold her at all. But this was a little girl who did not appear in the least to mind being crushed to the breasts of big, protecting men. She quickly snuggled into a comfortable position, and issued, in a pretty, mandatory tone, this pronunciamento:

"I want g'anna!"

Danforth, relieved thus astoundingly of his little burden, stared in the extremity of mystification from the child to Arkwright.

"Your baby?" were the only words that came from his dry lips.

"Yes, *mine*, man!" cried Arkwright huskily, brushing at his eyes with his loose hand. "Can't you *see* that she's *mine*, you bully old faithful chap?"

Danforth was too stupefied to do more than smile wearily. His own little girl was—where? He hated to let this one go from his arms.

"Isn't this luck?" Danforth was able to say presently, noticing that Arkwright was pretty busy trying to get himself together. "Isn't it luck?"

"Luck!" almost whispered Arkwright. "Danforth, it's the hand of God! That she should have fallen into your protection, of all living men!"

"Yes, and some protection, too, if you're asking me," put in the little hotel man, only vaguely apprehending the situation, but relieving the terrific tension of the two men. "You'd have thought so, friend," addressing Arkwright, "if you'd see him watching by that child's bed at my hotel and never closing an eye all night, and if you'd seen him fussing over her breakfast this morning! He may have been all right as a man-o'-war's man—but, if

you're taking it from me, Heaven really intended that fellow to be a nurse for young ones!"

Then Arkwright, searching Danforth's face and seeing the shadow that lay there back of the momentary joy in having found his shipmate's little girl, hastened to clear that shadow.

"One good turn deserves another, Danforth," he said.

Danforth studied him.

"You mean that you'll lend a hand now in my search?" he asked. "It's fine of you to suggest that. But, since you don't know them by sight, I'm afraid you couldn't do much, could you? I'm grateful, all the same, for your offer of a hand."

Arkwright, unable to hold it any longer, gave Danforth a most tremendous wallop on the back with his free hand.

"I don't mean anything of the sort, you everlastingly square and decent old shipmate and crater fighter!" he broke out in a voice resonant with delight. "I mean that *I've already found them!*"

Danforth fell to trembling like a man with a heavy chill.

"Where—are—they?" he asked with a great effort, in a hollow voice. "You mean it, don't you? Don't fool me, old man. I couldn't stand that. Where are they?"

"Fool you? Do you think I'd fool you about such a thing, after what you've done for me, you loon!" broke out Arkwright, his naturally deep voice playing odd tricks on him in his wrought-up state. "Come on!"

With his little girl clasped tight to his breast, Arkwright, weaving among the jam of people on the paths, broke into a jog trot. Danforth, breathing hard with excitement, used the last ounce of motive power in his weary frame to jog after him, the little hotel man waddling, panting violently, in the rear. They reached the Church Street gate of the cemetery in something less than three minutes.

Arkwright's mother and Mrs. Danforth were standing close by the gate, speaking sadly of all that had happened and that was happening; Danforth's

chubby little girl, with her mother's pretty, expressive face and his gray-blue eyes, was standing with her hand in her mother's, a finger at her lip, and an interested, speculative expression on her face as she watched the constantly changing throng. Hoy Moon was standing a little apart from them, buried in his own uninterpretable reflections. They all looked up when they heard a series of hoarse, indistinguishable cries. Two tall men, running, one with a little girl in his arms, were bearing down upon them, shouting as they came.

The old woman and the young woman shaded their eyes with their hands. Mrs. Danforth swayed slightly. But she quickly recovered, and she had the strength left to stoop and take the little girl into her arms.

"Here is papa, dear," she whispered faintly in the child's ear.

Then Danforth clasped the little girl in his frenzied embrace.

When Arkwright returned from another cruise on the Asiatic station on a brilliant day of summer last year, he beheld, with kindling eyes, when he took the steam cutter to cross from Mare Island to Vallejo, a happy-eyed, handkerchief-waving little group on the Vallejo dock. He had not expected to see them until he reached San Francisco. They were his mother, his little girl, now a merry-eyed, coquettish miss of nearly eight, Danforth and his equally pretty little girl of about the same age, and a chubby boy of about two, whom Danforth held in his arms.

Danforth had brought them all in his touring car—the car that he used mainly in his prospering real-estate business—from San Francisco to "surprise" Arkwright, for he had not got over the "surprise" habit; few men ever do. It was a wonderful greeting. It made Arkwright almost speechless for a time. It was not until they were all in the car that he found a chance to ask Danforth:

"What did you name the boy?"

Danforth, at the wheel, smiled reminiscently.

"Pretty good name," he replied. "His name is Arkwright Kilauea Danforth."

Arkwright shot him an amused look out of the tail of his eye.

"What's that 'Kilauea' about, old man?" he inquired. He knew. But he wanted to hear what Danforth would reply.

The complete novel in the next POPULAR is by ARTHUR B. REEVE. It is called "THE GREEN-GOODS KING." You will get it, and the first installment of a serial by ROY NORTON, "The Cross of Gold," in the first May POPULAR, on sale April 7th



THE MAN HE NEEDED

EDWARD D. EASTON, who claims that he made the largest single fee of any shorthand reporter in the world when he collected seventy-five thousand dollars from the lawyers in the famous Star Route trials, was sent to report an important hearing in a small Southern town. The work was so pressing that he found he needed an assistant who could typewrite. Searching for such a person, he sent out messages, advertised in the country papers, and made desperate appeals for somebody to locate the man.

He waited at his hotel all day without a sign of an assistant, and went to bed that night extremely worried because his work depended absolutely on his getting some one to help him. Shortly after midnight he was aroused by a knock at the door.

"I am the man you want," said the stranger. "I am the only typewriter in this part of the State, and—"

"Well," exclaimed Easton eagerly, "can you come to work to-morrow morning?"

"I was just going to tell you," continued the visitor, "that I read your advertisement saying you wanted a typewriter, and I thought I'd drop in to tell you I can't do the work. Lafe Smith and me have got to go fishing."



THIS VERY MOURNFUL MAN

COLONEL CECIL LYON, who knows as much about poker as he does about politics, and as much about politics as he does about poker, sat in a little game in New York one evening and became extremely annoyed, not to say peeved, by the lamentations of a man who was losing. Finally one of the other players, also irritated by the constant wail, told the loser:

"You are one of the greatest monologists I ever listened to outside of a theater."

"He's not a monologist," said the colonel tartly. "He's a moan-ologist."



A SENATORIAL COMPLIMENT

A SENATOR, who is noted for his disregard of grammar and his dislike of corporations, had just finished a terrific denunciation of the trusts.

"What do you think of that man?" a companion asked Senator Burton, of Ohio.

"I am convinced," said Burton solemnly, "that he is a man of great erudition, considering his opportunities."

"Oh, nothing in particular," said Danforth, returning Arkwright's amused look out of the corner of his eye. "Little thing that happened to me once on the edge of that crater. That occurrence helped to make a man of me. So I figured that the name wouldn't hurt the boy."

A Desert Odyssey

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "The Return to Mammoth City," "On Irish Hill," Etc.

Ulysses' ten years of wandering stirs the imagination. Not less so the wanderings of Shivering William who spent the best part of his life "trailing and trying to catch up with a party who had got a fifty years' start of him." The trail led to the canon of the dead men, and the drama enacted there has something of the intensity of the Homeric epic.

I HAD met the man once at Granite Tanks. That was ten years before, but even then men called him "Shivering William." He must have been a towering hulk of a man in his youth, for at sixty-three his great, stooped shoulders were on a level with the top of my head, and I am not a small man by several inches. He had unnaturally long arms, dangling almost to his knees and thrust slightly outward and forward, accentuating the impression, created by the pathetic droop of his shoulders, that through all the bitter years of wandering in search of lost Annie Bradley, Shivering William had carried great burdens.

His was a striking figure, and when in repose his great head, with its uncared-for shock of white hair, was ever bent in a listening attitude. His eyes, big, black, sad, and dreamy, looked into yours with the innocent, trusting confidence of a child; and when he would ask you, after the manner of the desert bred, where you had come from and how far you were going, he would always follow with the query: "Ever meet up with folks o' the name o' Bradley where you come from?" you would never have suspected, unless you knew his story, how eagerly he waited on your answer and how much it meant to him.

They called him Shivering William

because whenever he asked a man the eternal question: "Ever meet up with folks o' the name o' Bradley where you come from?" and the answer was in the negative, he always flinched, as from a blow. The big, stooped shoulders—the left one particularly—would lift and quiver ever so slightly. A city man would never have noticed this, but the desert bred notice all the little things; so they called him Shivering William.

He was by way of being a prospector. Eight times he had made big strikes, and eight times he had spent it all looking for "folks o' the name o' Bradley." From the most northerly spur of the White Mountains in Mono to the Colorado River, from the Alabama Hills to the Funeral Mountains, alluringly beautiful across the aching desolation of Death Valley, Shivering William ranged. That was his kingdom, and in that harsh land of misery and death he had trudged through fifty years, searching, searching for Annie Bradley, and in the end he found her.

Therein lies the story.

I was camped one night at Thirteen Buzzards Springs. The sun had just slipped down over the edge of the Coso Range, and the mules were contentedly munching their grain at the tail of the buckboard, when I observed something

bobbing about in the low desert sage. The object was too far away for me to ascertain with the naked eye whether it was a burro or a man; so I got out my field glasses and discovered that it was a man—on foot.

I watched him for five minutes, and during that short period he fell nine times. He was staggering in circles and making no headway, so that I knew he was mad with thirst and blind, and only moved because some hidden force within him willed it so.

Presently he fell for the tenth time, and this time he did not get up; so I saddled a mule and rode out to get him. Two coyotes had followed the man very patiently, waiting for him to die. Having routed these gray scavengers out of the sagebrush, I rode to the spot where they had been sitting on their hunkers, circled thirty or forty yards, and found my man.

I brought him into camp, gave him some whisky and water, and washed the gnats and the sand from his eyes. He was a strong, wiry man, and he rallied quickly. When it was safe to let him have all the water he wanted, I gave him food, whereupon he said that he was McTavish, superintendent of the Areca Mine over Danby way, and that he had lost Shivering William.

"How far back did you lose him?" I demanded. "Perhaps it isn't too late for me—"

"No use," interrupted my unexpected guest. "He's finished. Did you, by any chance, happen to know Shivering William?"

I said that I did.

"Well," said McTavish a little wildly, "he's found Annie Bradley. We followed the trail together, and he found her. Fifty years he's waited and watched and listened and searched and questioned, and at last they're together again. The Witch must have done it—the Witch of Old Woman Mountain. You've seen it, haven't you? Away over in hell, across the malapai ridge to the east.

"It's a big, red mountain—oxide of iron, you know—and it's faint and blue toward the top where the Witch sits, a

great chunk of granite against the sky line, and at dusk it takes a shape for all the world like an old woman sitting there in the solitude looking at something she holds in her hand. They call it the Witch of Old Woman Mountain, and folks say—the few that have been in there—that she's reading the Fates. Shivering William and I went in there—and the water gave out. We were looking for a lost mine."

McTavish took another long pull at my canteen. He pointed a trembling finger toward the east, where the vague outlines of a mountain range cut the ghostly desert moonlight.

"That's a horrible place," he complained huskily. "Nothing living in there. No coyotes, no chuckwallas, no side-winders—nothing. We found a good spring in there, with dead men's bones around it. There had been a fight there once—Indians and white men, and they fought for the water. Three things men fight hard for—water, money, and women; and these men fought for water."

"The whites held the spring, and the Indians fought from the low hillside above. There are big white granite boulders on that hillside, and there's a bleached skeleton behind every boulder, and most of the skulls have holes through them. Down by the spring there's a semicircle of old prairie schooners with flint arrowheads sticking in the woodwork, and the skeletons of men and women and horses and oxen. You can find more arrowheads inside these skeletons. It must have been quite a fight, and it went to a finish. I counted nineteen old squirrel rifles lying around."

"Yes, it must have been quite a fight. That spring lies in a little sandy cañon with the mouth of the cañon opening out on the desert, and Shivering William and I could see the sunlight glinting on the bones while yet we were two miles away. We wondered what it could be, and we went in to investigate. Our jacks had given out two days before, and our water had given out that morning, and we were in hard shape; so it was just as safe for us to forge

ahead as it would have been for us to turn back. Well, we went in and found the spring, right under Old Woman Mountain. I thought to myself, as I drove my head under, that it was a nice spring and quite worth fighting for.

"We had a little food, and we camped that night among the skeletons, and in the morning we were feeling pretty chipper. At least I was. Shivering William hadn't slept well. He was nervous and excited, and said he'd been hearing voices all night, and after breakfast he began talking about Annie Bradley.

"You've heard the tale about Annie Bradley, of course. She was Shivering William's sweetheart back in Springfield, Missouri, when he was a young lad in his twenties. He came to California first, crossing the plains in forty-nine, and Annie Bradley and her father started for California with an emigrant train in the spring of fifty-one. If that emigrant train ever arrived, Shivering William had never been able to prove it, and God knows he tried. That girl must have meant a lot to him, for he never married, and for fifty years he'd been drifting up and down the State of California, asking folks where they came from and if they'd ever met up with anybody by the name of Bradley.

"Of course I saw right off what was worrying the old man. We had stumbled into a country that Satan himself would have avoided, and there we found the remnants of an emigrant train. Annie Bradley had been a member of an emigrant train that failed to arrive, and Shivering William went picking his way around among the skeletons, shaking his head and shivering that big left shoulder of his and muttering to himself that it looked suspicious, mighty suspicious.

"Here was the remnant of an emigrant train that had doubtless taken the southern route from El Paso and up across the Colorado, and headed into Southern California over the old Fremont Trail. But they had lost the trail and wandered through an unknown pass in the mountains out into the San Bernardino Desert, and there they had

died, fighting with Indians at this unknown water hole.

"The emigrant train in which Annie Bradley and her father traveled had taken that route, and the last heard of them was at the Colorado River. I tried to argue with Shivering William, telling him of many things that might have happened to keep him and his old sweetheart apart after the wagon train had arrived, scattered, and separated to the four corners of the new El Dorado.

"But the old man shook his head. 'I promised Annie I'd meet her when she got into California,' he said simply. 'I've never been able to find her, but I'm trying to keep my word. If we should ever meet, it would please her to know that I didn't forget, and that I hunted for her always. There's just a chance that she's alive somewhere, waiting and wondering why I don't come.'

"I sat down on the wreck of one of the old prairie schooners, and watched him puttering around among the bones. It was easy to see that the old man was a bit off on this one subject, and it was useless to argue with him. He had loved Annie Bradley in the days of his youth. He loved her yet, and I knew that while he had life he would continue the search, asking folks where they came from and if they'd ever met up with folks of the name of Bradley.

"I discovered something else, too. While Shivering William had grown old and stooped and dim of eye, he always pictured Annie Bradley as she was when he left Missouri. It never seemed to occur to him that if they ever met she would be a bent, feeble-minded, doddering old woman with never a thought for her sweetheart of fifty years agone; that she might have married; that a thousand and one things might have happened.

"You see, he was a lonely, reserved old chap, and he'd lived so long alone in the waste places that he'd become a sort of mystic. The desert had 'got' him. He was 'touched,' and of the life that once he had lived, Annie Bradley was all that remained, and she was only a memory. I suppose Shivering Wil-

liam had an indelible photograph of her on his brain as she was when he saw her last—crying on his big, faithful breast the day he left for California.

"I knew the man was nothing less than the product of days and years of misery; that the desert had encompassed the horizon of his mind and blotted out all thought of the world beyond. So Shivering William merely sought to continue the two great searches of his existence. One of them was gold, and the other was Annie Bradley.

"I think Shivering William and I were the first human beings to enter that little cañon among the volcanic hills in fifty years, because, although we looked very closely, there wasn't a speck of ashes to be found beside that spring, proving that nobody had ever camped there.

"Yes, it was a good place to camp. Free of sandstorms, and even if the sight of the bleached dead did drive one out, there was always the spring to entice a man back. But it was a hard place on a man's nerves. Not a puff of wind, not a blade of vegetation of any kind—nothing but rocks and sand and the bones of dead men, glistening in an inferno of heat.

"Still? Friend, in that awful solitude a man could count every beat of his own heart. It appalled, crushed, frightened you, imbued you with that awful terror that you may have felt when you were a little chap and had to pass by a cemetery alone after dark.

"It was a horrible hole, and I wanted to get out, but Shivering William didn't seem to mind it. Just went poking around among the dead men, shivering a trifle more than usual and with his hoary old head bent to one side in that queer, listening attitude. He was looking for some little message out of the past, some token of identification, and by and by he found it in the wreck of one of the old prairie schooners.

"There was an old trunk there, rotten, ruined, falling apart at all four corners, with the leathern covering so warped and brittle from the half century of heat that it crumbled to dust in

one's hand. And in that trunk Shivering William found a Bible with a very faded autograph on the flyleaf. He couldn't read it himself, so he came to me with it. I got out my magnifying glass, and read these words:

"ANNIE BRADLEY,
Springfield, Missouri.
March 14, 1847.

"I handed the magnifying glass to Shivering William and went over to the spring for a drink. You see, I'd known the old man so long and I'd heard so much about Annie Bradley, that when I came across her name in that book it sort of upset me. Pretty soon he came over to the spring, and gave me back the magnifying glass. Then, without either speaking a word, we filled our canteens, took a great, long drink, rolled in the spring with our clothes on, got up, and walked down the cañon, out of that theater of death, and struck across the desert toward Malapai Springs. In silence the old man walked beside me hour after hour, and I dared not look at him, for something told me that if I did he'd shiver.

"We struck a sagebrush country about four that afternoon and made a dry camp. From the moment we had left the cañon of the dead men, neither had spoken. I didn't care to, and Shivering William couldn't. There was a little bright runway eroded through the alkali dust across each cheek, and I didn't want the old man to talk when he felt that way, so I stuck my feet to the fire, and went to sleep without bidding him good night.

"In the middle of the night I felt some one shaking me by the shoulder. I awoke a little out of temper, for if it's hot on the desert here during the day, it's chilly enough at night, and we'd chuck'd our blankets when the burros petered out.

"'Get up, Mac, quick,' said Shivering William. 'I hear a wagon passing off there on the desert'—he stretched his long arm toward the north—'and if we hit the trail now, we can soon catch up to it. It's a long hike to Malapai

Springs, and our water will be gone long before we reach it. Might be well to fall in with that wagon outfit—there! Hear it smashing through the sagebrush!"

"I raised on my elbow, and listened. From out of the night, perhaps a mile to the north, came the faint, but unmistakable creaking of a wagon and the snap of broken sage as the wheels crushed through.

"I remember thinking at the time how strange it was that a wagon should be out there on the desert traveling through the sagebrush in the dead of night. But Shivering William was right about the water, and we knew that the man who dares the desert with a wagon outfit carries an ample supply of water, and that it behooved us to fall in with the night wanderers as soon as possible; so we struck out at once through the sage, following the sound of the wagon as it ground along.

"The air was cool and bracing, and we walked as rapidly as we could; yet although I knew that the pace at which we were traveling was faster than the progress of a wagon team through sand, we seemed unable to gain on the wagon. Always it kept the same distance ahead of us, the sound of its slow progress neither increasing nor diminishing. Once Shivering William paused and shouted, and I emptied my gun into the air, but no answering hail floated back to us from the party ahead.

"The thing puzzled me. There was not a breath of wind blowing, yet while we could distinctly hear the creaking of the wagon and the occasional snort of a tired horse, the old man's shouts and the fusillade from my gun were, apparently, unheard by the people in the wagon. I complained to Shivering William.

"'Perhaps the driver is deaf,' he suggested.

"I scouted the idea. Deaf men—well, I've met several deaf men on the desert, but they were all dead, and the obstinacy of that wagon driver irritated me. I lit a match and looked at my watch. It was a quarter past three, and we had been following that wagon for

an hour and a half, yet we were as far away from it as when we started.

"I suggested to Shivering William that we wait until daylight and then follow the trail. I said that I was afraid of stepping on a side-winder in the dark, and, moreover, the sage was getting thicker and higher and we were stumbling and falling and getting barked up; that we were wearing ourselves out for no purpose.

"Shivering William said he thought we were gaining on the wagon, and implored me to follow for half an hour longer. Well, he was an old man, and he had to be humored a little, so I agreed, and from that time on we seemed to gain a little.

"Once I heard a man's voice, and Shivering William said that the voice which replied to it was a woman's. I was in doubt. It might have been a boy's. What worried me was what in blazes they were doing out there in a wagon, breaking trail at night through the sagebrush. I concluded that they must have about six good mules, for a team of horses could never have stood that grind and at that pace.

"Little by little the gray of approaching dawn began to steal over the desert, and the world took on definite shape. A mile in front of us a great, black streak rose against the sky line, looming dimly out of the dawn. The old man saw it, too, and remarked that it was the southern extremity of a great malapai plain. In some forgotten age the black lava from a volcano off to the northeast had flowed down to the desert, and covered it for nearly twenty miles in all directions. The wall of malapai in front of us rose sheer forty feet from the floor of the desert, black, forbidding, impregnable, and stretched away into the desolation beyond. What lay behind that malapai wall neither Shivering William nor I knew. We only knew that at this barrier, looming faintly through the dawnlight, the wagon would be forced to halt, and then we would catch up with it.

"We pressed onward. Gradually the gray light spread, and we were enabled to pick our path and make better time.

But while the sounds of the wagon's progress came faintly to our ears from time to time, the wagon itself we could not see. It had disappeared.

"At four-fifteen it was light enough for us to see the malapai wall very distinctly. We were within three hundred yards of it when suddenly Shivering William clutched my arm, and pointed toward the left.

"There's the wagon," he said.

"Just emerging from a little cañon which seemed to cut into the malapai wall, I could see the heads of two horses. Slowly they picked their way up the slope, and gradually there came into view the canvas top of a prairie schooner. They came up what was evidently a natural causeway along the side of a great cleft in the malapai wall, and presently they came out on top of the wall itself, swung to the right, and headed north. As they did so, Shivering William and I saw that a man and a woman walked beside the wagon and that the man had his arm around the woman, supporting her. We were near enough to see that the team was weak and jaded, and with difficulty hauled the wagon up the grade.

"We shouted at them, but if they heard us they gave no heed. Within a minute they had passed on, and the malapai wall shut them away from our vision.

"Hurry, William," I said, and started to run. "There goes a pair of tender-feet in a bad way. Once we climb that malapai buttress and strike the hard country on top, we can make fast time and catch up with them."

"We swung to the left, entered the cleft in the wall, and found the trail at once—a natural causeway that led up the side of the gash in the malapai wall until we came out on top of the wall itself. The wheel tracks ran along in front of us, up a gentle slope. At the crest of this slope Shivering William and I halted, and it would be a hard matter to say who shivered the most.

"Before us swept a malapai desert, level as a dining-room table and stretching away for miles and miles in black, unbroken desolation. This malapai was

different. There were no great, jagged rocks like clinkers from the devil's stoke hole. The formation was a soft, igneous rock which had flowed down in liquid form, and, after hardening, had given to the country a sort of flat, black, shiny appearance like a monstrous piece of old rubber belting. Across this horrid stretch of nothingness, Shivering William and I gazed for that old prairie schooner—and it wasn't there!

"No, it wasn't. Ten minutes before we had seen it silhouetted against the dawn as it topped the malapai ridge, and now on this flat, unbroken plain, where even a jack rabbit couldn't have hidden, it was not in sight.

"There was something devilishly uncanny about the whole proceeding.

"It's mighty strange, William," I said. "They're gone, and yet they can't be more than a third of a mile in front of us. That team was pretty well spent, and the man and the woman were walking to lighten the load."

"I don't understand it," replied the old man, "but let's follow along farther. Perhaps there's another fissure in the malapai, and they have driven into it. Let's shove right along. I'm afraid something has happened to those people, and they'll need our help."

"We pressed along for half a mile. Suddenly we both paused.

"One of the horses went down here, William," I said. "He fell, and they had a hard time of it getting him up again. We'll soon catch up with them."

"Shivering William's face was very white, and there was a frightened look in his old eyes as our glances met.

"What I don't understand, Mac," says Shivering William, "is the fact that while these folks ahead of us make a very plain trail, you and I do not. If a man was to trail us now, he'd have to have a bloodhound. *Man, did you ever see a trail as fresh and deep as this in malapai before?*"

"I had not—and I stood looking at Shivering William like I'd seen a ghost. The thing was uncanny, terrible. It frightened me, and made me weak at the stomach. We were following a trail

across a malapai plain when we both knew that nothing human could make a trail in malapai. Shivering William looked at me, and shivered violently.

"That man and—the woman," he said jerkily. "Of course you know who it was, Mac, don't you? The woman was Annie Bradley, and the man was probably her father, and they're leaving this trail so I can follow it."

"I got down on my hands and knees, and examined the track very closely. I even used my magnifying glass."

"We're following the wrong trail, William," I persisted; "this trail is several days old."

"People don't make trails in malapai," reiterated William.

"Well, now that I think of it, I can explain that," I replied. "This plain is composed of a melted, igneous rock, which, under a great heat, softens just like asphalt in a city street on a hot day, and of course that accounts for the tracks showing so plain."

"But these tracks have been made just at daylight, I tell you," replied Shivering William. "We saw the wagon, and we *know* they were made this morning. The plain isn't hot, because the sun isn't up yet, and the malapai is cold, Mac; it's cold, I tell you. The thing *is*—and yet, unless we've both gone crazy, we know it is not."

"But we saw the wagon," I protested.

"And the horses and the man and the woman—"

"And we *heard* the wagon creaking. You heard it first, William, and you woke me up, and then I heard it. I swear I heard the creaking. You did, too, didn't you, William?"

"I thought I did," said Shivering William huskily, "but I'm an old man, and I'm not certain. Things don't look right. Yet I've been thirstier than I was yesterday, and I've known hotter days on the desert."

"It's those damned skeletons over in that cañon," I complained. "We stayed there too long, and some sickness has gotten into our blood—"

"Mac."

"What?"

5B

"Do I look crazy, Mac? Tell me honest. I'm an old man, and I've searched fifty years for Annie Bradley, and after we found—what we found—yesterday, I know she's dead. Lots of people have said I was crazy on the subject of Annie Bradley, but I tell you, Mac, I'm not. Since we've been following this wagon trail, I've thought it all out, and I know the answer. Annie's body isn't back—there. It's on—ahead. We've struck the trail, Mac, and I'm going to follow it. That was Annie and her old man walking beside the wagon, and if I follow the trail I'll find her. If you feel that you don't care to come along, too, I won't feel offended if you leave me. It ain't any of your business, Mac, but with me it's the only—"

"Come on," I said.

"So we went on, and by and by we came to a Joshua tree. Just one lone Joshua tree where a Joshua tree had no business to grow. It was about fifteen feet tall, with dead bunches of leaves hanging to it, and its grotesque arms thrust downward and outward, like Shivering William's. And when I saw that Joshua tree I stopped, and so did Shivering William. We looked at the Joshua tree, and we looked at each other.

"Can a man walk through a Joshua tree?" I asked Shivering William.

"No, he can't," replied the old man.

"Have a long pull at the canteen, William, and then we'll look again."

"We did, and then we looked again, and sure enough we saw the imprint of the man's foot on one side of the tree and another footprint on the other side. No, a man simply cannot walk through a Joshua tree, or any other kind of a tree, yet there were the tracks, and there was the Joshua tree where a Joshua tree had no business to grow.

"Mac," said Shivering William, "don't you understand? *This trail is fifty years old.*"

"It's got to end somewhere," says I, "so let's follow it."

"So we kept on following the trail, and the old man kept muttering and mumbling to himself, and I thought I'd

go crazy if we didn't find something soon. By and by we saw something about a half mile ahead of us, and when we got up with it, we found the ruin of a prairie schooner!

"It was old—just like the wagons back in the cañon of the dead men. So old that the wood had dry-rotted and the canvas cover had rotted away, too, until there were only a few shreds of it left clinging to the frame. The tires had fallen off, and the rear wheels had caved in, and the years of heat had sprung every piece of metal in the wagon away from the woodwork. There were a pair of whippletrees falling to pieces, and the tongue of the wagon was broken in half, where one of the horses had fallen on it. And beside the tongue of the wagon was the white skeleton of a horse, with a few scraps of burned leather enwrapping the bones. The story was plainly written in the trail.

"The off horse quit here," said Shivering William, "so they had to abandon the wagon. They packed some grub on the remaining horse, and shoved on. We'll come up with them by noontime."

"I pointed to the rotten sideboards of the abandoned schooner, where the initials 'J. E. B.' had been cut in the wood.

"What does that stand for?" I asked.

"John Edward Bradley," replied the old man; "he was my Annie's father."

"We rooted around among some boxes, the remnant of a sheet-iron camp stove, and some cooking utensils in the bed of the wagon, and presently I found something. It was a bracelet, warped, corroded, blackened. I handed it to Shivering William.

"I gave that to Annie Bradley—Christmas of forty-eight," said he, and kissed it, and I wished I'd had a drink of something stronger than warm water. My nerve was all gone, and I needed it. It's a mighty gruesome business trailing and trying to catch up with a party that's got a fifty-year start on you. I tell you I didn't like it, but I had to keep on. It wouldn't have been fair to go back on the old man then. We'd come too far together, and we'd suffered. You understand."

"Still, for Shivering William's sake, I tried to induce him to turn back. He was an old man and weak, and I knew the desert would get him if he persisted in following that old trail. But he merely turned and pointed toward the Witch of Old Woman Mountain, looming very faint and distant, miles and miles across the desert toward the southeast.

"'I'm going to let the Witch decide,' he said firmly. 'There she sits reading the Fates. She came to my chapter yesterday when we struck the trail in that cañon, and I'm going to follow it to the finish. I can't leave it now. And you know, Mac, we saw Annie only this morning. She's waiting for me somewhere along the trail, because she knows I'm coming sure. You'd better take the water and leave me, Mac, for I'll not come back.'

"I couldn't do that. But I wanted to turn back. I had sense enough for that. But I'd come so far, and we'd seen so many strange things of late that I concluded a few miles more or less wouldn't matter a great deal. Some power greater than my own common sense impelled me irresistibly to follow Shivering William until he found Annie Bradley; so we left the old, moldering prairie schooner, and followed the tracks of the man and the woman and the horse.

"The trail was startlingly plain. In all that horrible country it never rains, and the desert wind, sweeping over that hard stretch of malapai, had carried with it no particles of sand or earth to cover up the trail. It had been blazed in the malapai on a day when the awful heat of the sun had melted that igneous rock to the consistency of dough, and when night came on and the rock hardened again, the trail was there forever.

"And so we followed it. Two miles farther, and we came across the skeleton of the other horse, with a few rusty tins scattered beside it. But the trail of the man and the woman led onward, and Shivering William and I followed. Presently the tracks of the woman disappeared, although the tracks of the man remained.

"'Hurry, Mac,' panted Shivering William; 'he's carrying her.'

"We followed the man's trail for half an hour, and found where he had set Annie Bradley down, and let her walk again. Farther on, we found the imprint of two hands and two knees, where the man had fallen, and for all that we knew the trail was half a century old, we hurried, and in the end we came out on to the edge of the northern side of the malapai wall. The man and the woman had picked their trail down the face of the malapai wall, and then the tracks led off into the sands of the open desert, and the trail was lost.

"I looked at Shivering William, and his old chin was trembling until his beard seemed to beat a gentle tattoo against his breast. 'Poor little girl!' he muttered. 'How she must have suffered! Poor little girl!'

"He sat down in the blistering trail, and wept. It made me feel badly, so I looked away out over the desert, and tried to speculate on the final finish of Annie Bradley and her old man. I wondered why they had left the malapai and taken to the sand of the desert, and I knew they must have had a reason.

"In the desert, as you know, there's always a reason for everything, and pretty soon I found the reason. A couple of miles out in the desert I could see a pale-green spot in the ocean of gray sage. There was a spring out there, and I knew that if we headed for the green spot we might find Annie Bradley and her old man.

"The trail was lost, but that didn't matter. We had only to travel in a straight line and keep our eyes on the pale-green spot. So I took Shivering William by the arm, and we started. Of course I was a fool, but I couldn't help it. I couldn't go back on the old man. I *had* to help him find her. We were so close—and after fifty years! You understand.

"So we kept on, and presently I saw the sun shining on something, and I stooped and picked it up.

"It was a plain, white button. Ever loaf along through a wilderness where

you think no human being has ever trod, and then come across a button? It makes you pause and reflect a whole lot. I gave the button to Shivering William, and he put it in his shirt pocket with the bracelet and the Bible. A quarter of a mile from the spring we picked up a high, old-fashioned, woman's comb, made of horn.

"She was wearing that comb when I kissed her good-by, sobbed Shivering William. 'I ought to know, Mac. She had her little brown head in the hollow of my arm, and she hated to let me go.'

"I made him quit talking. There are some things that won't bear discussion, and I wanted to hearten him for the end of the trail, for I knew it would not be long now. That man and woman were very weak and wabbly when they left the malapai, and, being tenderfeet, the chances were they'd drunk themselves to death at the spring. I expected to find the bodies there, and I wasn't surprised when we did, only I was looking for bleached bones, and—

"That's Annie Bradley," says Shivering William, and he went over and knelt down beside her. There was the body of a man on the other side of the spring, but I didn't look at him. I wanted to see Annie Bradley.

"Ever see an Egyptian mummy after it's been unwrapped. That's what Annie Bradley looked like, and I wondered why, until I dipped my finger in the spring and tasted the water. Then I knew. Arsenic spring. Poor devils! They were new to the country, and they didn't know, so they drank deeply of the arsenic spring, and I suppose they rolled in it. And there they died. The arsenic in the water preserved the bodies, and the sun did the rest, and except for the sunken eyes and the drawn, twisted features, there was Annie Bradley as Shivering William had left her. Nature makes a neat job of it once in a while.

"Yes, it was a mighty strange business, that. But I tell you I heard that wagon creaking through the sage in the dark, and I saw the wagon and the horses and the man and the woman on

top of the malapai wall. And I saw the dead men and the prairie schooners in that cañon by Old Woman Mountain. It may be that Annie Bradley and her father were the only two to survive that fight at the spring. I don't know what to think. Shivering William said he heard voices all night in that cañon, and perhaps he did. You remember how he used to carry his head to one side in that listening attitude.

"I don't know what to think of it all. I only know that poor old Shivering William gave me what water he had in his canteen, and said he was an old, old man, and that he'd stay with Annie

Bradley. He said he'd drink of the arsenic spring after I had gone, and that God had been very good to him indeed—and I've been wandering a long time in the dark—because I was low enough to take the water from him. And he thanked me, McTavish, for a good friend and true, and bade me go out of the desert before I grew to love it. And I, knowing that I had no right to interfere—I took the canteen and went away—and the coyotes followed me—through hell, I tell you, and I left Shivering William—left him there with his boyhood's love by the side of the arsenic spring."

There are more good stories by Peter B. Kyne coming. If you have read one, we know you will want the others. The next one is entitled "A Prophet Without Honor."



THE MOST EXPENSIVE SHAVE IN THE WORLD

CHARLES A. COTTERILL has a grand and gorgeous set of whiskers which, in their own gold and tawny way, show as many varying hues as changeable silk under the midday sun. There are mixed up in that growth of beard all the marvelous tints of the sunrise, the South African gold mines, and the circus posters. But there is a sad story connected with the facial adornment.

The first year that Cotterill traveled for a big drug firm, of New York City, he waved the whiskers up and down a wide territory, selling much merchandise and making many friends. At the end of the season he got a shave, and on his next trip the tragedy began to unfold. Nobody knew him. Every time he went up to a man to whom he had made a sale previously, the fellow would say:

"You are not Cotterill. How well I remember Cotterill! He was a merry, good-natured, entertaining fellow, and he told such good stories. Besides he had whiskers, and you have none. You can't be Cotterill."

After a week of this, Cotterill, utterly dejected by the fact that he could make no headway in his business, telegraphed his firm as follows:

Must have leave of absence long enough to grow a beard.

He has not shaved since.



THE CIRCULATION OF ORATORY

ON one occasion, Senator Tillman was so much pleased with a speech he made that he had it printed in pamphlet form.

"I congratulate you," Senator Bailey told him, a few days later, "on that speech which you have circulated as a pamphlet. I happened to see one this morning, and it contained some of the best things I have ever seen in any pamphlet on that subject."

"I am very proud to hear you say so," said Tillman, much gratified. "What were the things that pleased you so much?"

"Why," explained Bailey, "as I passed the Senate restaurant this morning, I saw a girl come into the corridor with two cherry pies wrapped up in it."

The Strategy of Battle

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "Out for the Stuff," "Little Sunset," Etc.

Not a "fight" story, though there is a fight in it.
It is a story of professional wheelmen of the palmy,
balmy days of the grand circuit, when a number
of brainy athletes pedaled their way to prosperity

LISTEN, all you second-story men!" said Tommy Needham, half lifting himself from the rub-down table and extending a shapely calf for manipulation at the hands of the deft attendant. "Listen! Something has got to be done about Mac and Stevie. They're getting too strong for us, and, what's more, they seem to want to hog *all* the races this season. Now, in that last one, Mac gave me the elbow on the upper turn, and mighty near sent me over the fence. Before I could get straightened out again, Stevie had the jump, and the stuff was all off."

"Why didn't you holler to the officials?" asked Artie Greville, the diminutive Canadian sprint rider.

"Yes!" said Needham, with a snort. "Why didn't I? A lot of good that would do! Mac is too smooth to pull anything of that sort where it can be seen; and, as for hollering, didn't you holler like a wolf the other day when Jimmy Ball rode into you at the start of the half mile? Did it get you anything?"

A chuckle ran around the dressing room, where several members of the powerful "Ajax" racing team were gathered after the feature race of the day. For several seasons, the firm which manufactured the Ajax bicycle had boasted the most formidable string of racers on the grand circuit, headed by Tommy Needham, twice a national champion.

Greville turned pink, but did not attempt an answer. It was well under-

stood that Jimmy Ball had done no more than play even for a very clever trick which Artie had worked on him at the Cleveland meet, by which piece of strategy Freeman, another member of the Ajax team, had been enabled to win the race.

"There'll be no squealing to the officials," said Tommy Needham, with decision. "They know the situation as well as any of us. Anything we do has got to be done among ourselves, and I tell you that Mac and Stevie are getting too gay. Too fresh. Some teamwork is legitimate, and I stand for it, but this thing of falling off a wheel to put a contender out of the race is too raw. It's got to stop."

"Huh!" said Phil Parker, the manager of the Ajax string. "The trouble is that Mac is too wise for you. He rides with his head, that boy does; and I wish we had him signed up for this season. He outguesses you, Tommy. He's got more brains in a minute than all the rest of you put together, and that's why he wins so often."

"It doesn't take a lot of brains to fall off a bicycle at the head of the stretch!" retorted the star rider angrily; and the other racers growled in chorus. "I'm going to take no more chances. I'm going to put one of those guys out of the business."

Now, a brainless man can learn to ride a bicycle. This was proved some fifteen or twenty years ago, when the entire population of the country glided about on rubber tires, and sweaters and knickerbockers became staple lines in

all furnishing-goods houses. But a brainless man would never have won a professional bike race in the palmy, balmy days of the grand circuit. No, not though he had the best legs in the wide world. He would have found the competition too keen for him.

You cannot enlist brains unless there is money in sight, and fifteen or twenty years ago there was money in the bicycle-racing game—enough of it to attract a horde of trim young athletes with brains, as well as lungs and legs. With every big manufacturing concern maintaining an expensive racing stable of riders, rubbers, trainers, and press agents, and every city anxious to pay its way in at the turnstile to witness the speed battles, the wheel became the most popular sporting medium of the day, and the racing recruits poured in from the four points of the compass.

Of all the youngsters who pedaled their way into prosperity in those days, the brainiest was Lloyd MacDonald, six feet two inches in his bare feet, built like a lath, equipped with both speed and endurance—the craftiest racing general that ever sat down on a racing saddle.

MacDonald had come out of the West, staggering under a miscellaneous assortment of gold watches—in those halcyon days plated watches were taboo; the riders would have none of them—diamond medals, racing wheels, ormolu clocks, silver cups, and other amateur trophies too numerous to mention.

He pumped his way into attention by winning the greatest road race held in the West, an annual classic which never failed to attract the very cream of the speedy amateurs of four States. The critical crowd gathered at the starting point laughed at the rather gawky young man who appeared clad in a blue bathing suit of cheap cotton material and trundling a heavy road wheel of ancient vintage. (In those days a rider had to sport the latest model bicycle or lose caste.) The scratch men, their silken breasts loaded with medals and their feather-weight racing wheels by their sides, made sarcastic remarks and offered advice.

"Hey, Slats!" said the great Shoe-

maker. "Where you going with that ice wagon?"

It was a good joke, and the crowd laughed uproariously.

"You'll see where I'm going, you big tramp!" answered the youth in the bathing suit. "You'll ride behind me all the way."

"What do you know about that?" asked one of the officials. "Who is that fellow?"

"Name's MacDonald," said the starter, examining his list. "He's a paper carrier. Rides down to Los Gatos and back again every day on that truck he's got there. Nervy, eh? *You twenty-minute men, get on the mark!*"

The unknown on the ice wagon won that road race so far, that what started out to be a joke turned into a brilliant sensation. Not only did Lloyd MacDonald hump his old roadster home minutes in front of all competition, but he actually took the second-time prize. The great Shoemaker was fourth.

That was Mac's first race, and before night several bright local agents of the manufactures had made love to the Los Gatos whirlwind. They wished to make him presents of the latest thing in racing wheels, for advertising was a strong factor in the bicycle-racing game, just as it is in the automobile-racing game of to-day, and the winner of the Garden City road race was worth having on the staff.

For a time, "Long Mac" devastated the amateur ranks on the Pacific Coast; but it did not take him long to decide that while an amateur had "standing," the professionals were getting the money. So he crated his racing wheels and headed Eastward, where golden rewards were glowing.

Now, in those bright days, an ambitious young man with nothing more than a stout heart and a brilliant turn of speed would have found it as hard to break into the winner's column as it would be for a blind beggar to find his way into the vault of the treasury. Winning a professional race in fast company was largely a matter of teamwork; and it did not take MacDonald long to discover this.

Good riders were eagerly snapped up by the representatives of the manufacturing concerns, and the professionals were thus broken up into half a dozen formidable cliques, each working against the other. There has been some teamwork in horse-racing, too; but a horse is an animal which sometimes has a mind of its own; hence it was left to the wheel to advance to its highest point the art of trickery in being first at the wire. With a dozen fast men in a race, representing several racing teams, the amount of jockeying and maneuvering which can be done is simply marvelous. It took something more than sheer speed to win from the professionals. That task required intelligent coöperation, and the long-legged, solemn-faced MacDonald was one of the most intelligent coöperators that ever split first money.

The newcomer from the West examined his new field carefully for several weeks. He might have had a contract with any one of the powerful racing strings; but he declined all advances, and at last attached himself to the "Bullet" team, a second-rate organization, having as its star rider a youth named Stevie Orland.

Orland was as fast as a rocket and as game as a pebble, and, had it been a question of tearing away from the tape and matching speed with his opponents, he would have been the greatest rider of his time. But the professionals of those days never broke records unless it was carefully advertised in advance; and in a mile race they figured to spend three-fourths of the distance in jockeying and skirmishing for position, every man watching his neighbor and fighting for the advantage of placement. The outsider who tried to sneak away at the half found himself of use as a pacemaker, and dead in the final hundred-yard sprint for the wire.

There was no man on the grand circuit who could defeat Stevie Orland if he was allowed clear sailing in the last quarter; but Stevie, playing all but a lone hand, with weak and inefficient support by his teammates, could not buck the strong racing aggregations with any great amount of success. If a race was

worth winning, he usually found himself neatly pocketed when the contenders began to grunt over their handlebars in the last whirlwind eighth.

MacDonald thought that he saw possibilities in a combination with the brilliant but unfortunate Stevie, and the result at the end of the first season satisfied him and pleased the management. The Bullet team had not won many races, but it had a long string of seconds and thirds to its credit, and was increasing in efficiency.

"Wait till next year, Steve," said MacDonald. "We'll make all these swelled-up champions hump to beat us!"

The next season found the Bullet combination a factor in all the important events. With Mac to lay out the plan of campaign, upset the counterplots of the opposition, "take care" of the dangerous sprinting rivals, and leave Stevie free to sail down to the wire, the Bullet team began to make them all sit up and take notice.

There may be some question as to the inventor of the thing called "inside baseball"; but there has never been any argument as to the originator of inside bicycle racing. The lathy young strategist from the far West showed the top-notch professionals of the country so many elaborate tricks that he made their heads swim in a vain attempt to keep track of them. His inventive genius was amazing. When he "put over" a new one and it succeeded, a schemer less wise than MacDonald might have tried it again. Lloyd knew that the other riders would be watching for the same trick, and, while they watched, MacDonald and Stevie would execute a totally different bit of strategy.

Many a fine counterplot was hatched during that second season of the Bullet team; but, in spite of all their preparation, the other riders found it almost impossible to keep the tall Californian and his partner out of the money. MacDonald, whose endurance was almost past belief, had developed into a formidable sprint rider; and at any distance, from one to ten miles, he might be depended upon to show up some-

where in the first flight. Thus, when the other riders devoted their attentions to Stevie, Mac often slipped through to victory.

The opposition grew desperate, and went beyond the ordinary bounds in an attempt to put one or the other of the Bullet stars out of commission. McLaurin, of the Eagle team, put Stevie over the fence at Pittsburgh; but the next day MacDonald fell off his wheel ten yards from the tape, and McLaurin broke his arm in the tangle which resulted. Mac was very sorry about the arm, and explained that his seat post had broken. And he produced the seat post.

"It ain't safe to monkey with those fellows," said Fahey, McLaurin's riding companion. "I told Laurie not to try any of that rough stuff on Steve, because this big stiff Mac is just crazy enough to kill somebody. There ought to be a law against doing what he done to-day."

"Well," said a rider, "he took a chance on breaking his own neck, didn't he?"

As the time drew near for the most important meet of the year, the lines in the rival camps were more closely drawn. The crowning event of this racing carnival was to be a mile race for professionals, \$2,000 to the winner, \$750 to second, and \$250 to third. Here was one race, at least, which every star short-distance man hoped to win, and it was less than a week away when Tommy Needham announced that something must be done to Mac and Stevie. And in all the other racing camps there was muttering against the Bullet combination; not without cause, it may be stated.

On the eve of the opening of the three-day meet which was to terminate with "the big-money race," MacDonald heard rumors that all the other teams were to combine against the Bullets. He lifted his bushy eyebrows and listened attentively as the talebearer unfolded his plot.

"Y'see, Mac," said this person, none other than a rubber in the Columbian stable, "they've all got it in for you and

Steve, and they don't care *who* wins that race so long as you don't get anything. Jimmy Ball, Needham, Eddie Norton, and all that bunch—they're in together this time, and the winner'll split first money. You and Stevie ain't going to have a chance, because every man in the race will be out to do either one of you. 'Anybody but Mac and Stevie,' they said; so you can see what a swell chance you've got."

"Much obliged," said MacDonald. "Of course, if they're all in the combine, it makes it look bad, eh?"

"Oh, they're all in it—all the real ones," said the rubber. "They'd spill you if they couldn't get you any other way."

"The dirty burglars!" said Mac, with virtuous indignation.

It was the opening day of the big meet. The half-mile professional event had just been decided—twice around the quarter-mile track—and, thanks to Mac's maneuvering, Stevie had been in a commanding position when the sprint began. Yet Orland had bungled badly on the last turn, and had been beaten back into fourth place behind Needham, Ball, and Greville.

The riders, in their bath robes and followed by their attendants, were trooping under the grand stand to the dressing rooms, when they heard MacDonald's voice lifted in anger.

"I say you did! You tossed it off on purpose!"

"Why, Mac!" ex postulated Stevie. "What's the matter with you? Are you crazy?"

"Crazy!" sneered MacDonald. "You must *think* I'm crazy, or you wouldn't try to pull anything as raw as that on me!"

"I did the best I could," said Stevie, with heat.

"And I say you didn't!" snarled MacDonald.

"You're a liar!" said Stevie.

Bang! MacDonald's fist landed on Stevie's jaw, and down went the riding member of the Bullet combination with a crash. The suddenness of the quarrel paralyzed the other riders. They were

acquainted with MacDonald's rasping tongue and Stevie's peppery temper; but such a thing as a fight between the long-legged Californian and his partner was almost beyond the wildest flight of imagination. Why, they had been closer than brothers for two years!

Stevie leaped to his feet, screaming with rage.

"Hit me, will you?" he yelled. "You big tramp! I'll show you!"

The rubbers and trainers rushed from their kennels at the sound of the blows; but the riders themselves stood staring, open-mouthed, taken entirely by surprise. "Butch" Bosbyshell, the Bullet trainer, hurled himself between the two infuriated wheelmen, who were fighting like wild cats.

"Here! Here!" he panted. "Mac! Stevie! What's the matter?"

Mac spared enough time to drop Bosbyshell kicking to the floor, and then the fight was resumed. The men were well matched as to weight, but MacDonald had the advantage of the reach, and he was a clean, hard hitter. It was well known that he had often sparred with the heavyweight champion of the world, and, though Stevie was game and willing, and fought like a fury, inside of half a minute MacDonald had closed one of his eyes, and the blood was pouring from Stevie's nose in a stream.

"I ain't licked yet!" Stevie kept repeating. "You ain't got me licked! You can't lick me—no, nor anybody like you!"

But, in spite of his defiance, Stevie was a badly licked young man when MacDonald was dragged away toward his dressing room. He braced himself in the doorway and looked back at the group surrounding Stevie.

"You've been looking for this for two weeks," said Mac, breathing heavily. "Now you've got it!"

"You said I laid down!" howled Stevie, struggling to free himself from the tardy peacemakers. "Just because I lost that last race——"

"Listen to him!" sneered MacDonald. "If it hadn't been for me, he'd have been slinging hash in some cheap restaurant. That's where he started, and

that's where he'll finish! See what you can do alone around here. I'm through!"

MacDonald, quivering with rage, walked into the Bullet dressing room, found some of Stevie's clothes in his locker, and hurled them out on the floor.

"Here's where we split!" he snarled. "Go on and see what you can do without me to do the thinking for you!"

Harry Connolly, the manager of the Bullet team, hearing a wild rumor, came rushing in from the track, breathless and excited. He found his tall strategist hurrying into his street clothes, white and silent, while Stevie, with one lovely black eye and a strip of pink court-plaster on his chin, was stretched on the rubbing table, mumbling threats.

The news traveled like electricity. Mac and Stevie had had a fight. Mac had quit the Bullet team. Mac had called Stevie a liar. Stevie had called Mac something worse. Stevie had a broken nose. Mac had lost two teeth. The friendship of two years was at an end, and with it the dreaded combination of brains and speed. Harry Connolly had tried to square it. Mac had "taken a poke" at the manager. These and other rumors fled through the entire chain of dressing rooms. It was the greatest surprise of the season, and Tommy Needham was the one who started the report that there was a skirt tangled up in the mess somewhere. It was the juiciest scandal of the wheeling world.

That night there was but one topic of conversation. MacDonald, who had been rooming with Stevie at the hotel patronized by the riders of the grand circuit, moved farther down the hall, and Harry Connolly ran back and forth between his star performers, cackling like an agitated hen; but his efforts toward peace were unavailing. The other riders, with hall transoms wide open and scouts on duty in the corridors, "kept cases" on the march of events.

At nine o'clock that night, so it was faithfully reported, Connolly was in close consultation with MacDonald in the latter's room. At ten, the poker

players in Needham's boudoir caught the sound of low voices in the hall, and instantly recognized the speakers. Connolly was still pleading. MacDonald was obdurate. Scraps of the conversation floated in through the transom, and the deal stopped while the riders listened breathlessly.

"No," said MacDonald. "It ain't any use to go all over it again, Harry. I'm through, I tell you. It was coming, anyway—he's been looking for trouble for a month—hadn't been for me, he wouldn't have won a race this year—now he's all puffed up, and thinks he's hell—found out that he told a girl in Chicago that—"

The wheelmen looked at each other across the table, and Needham grinned.

"I called the turn, didn't I?" he whispered. "Whenever two guys as thick as Mac and Stevie fall out, there's a gal in it somewhere. Couple of damn fools!"

Connolly argued long and low.

"No," came Mac's voice. "If I ride Saturday, it won't be with him—like to get a piece of that money if I could, y'know, but—out of the question. You can tell him, too, that I'm going to be in that race, and he'd better stay out if he knows what's good for him. If he starts, he won't get anything—I'll make that my business—well, if you don't like it, Harry, tell him to keep out! Because, as sure as we're here, I'll keep him from getting anything!"

Connolly's voice was heard in earnest expostulation, and then the men passed down the hall, still talking. Jimmy Ball sighed as he shuffled the cards; and it was a sigh of relief.

"Right into our mitt!" he said.

"Our mitt!" said Needham. "Where do you get that 'our' stuff? The combination is off. No need for it any more. You heard what he said, and you know Mac. He's out to 'do' Stevie, and he'll take any chance, and, with 'em fighting each other, it's an open thing between us. Stevie was the dangerous one, but without Mac he can't do anything; and Mac'll be so busy keeping Stevie out of the money that he won't get anything himself. If I win that

race, I ain't going to cut first money with anybody but the fellows on my team. And that goes!"

So the protective combination ceased to exist, and then and there each man began laying his own plans to win. Mac would take care of Stevie, and that would keep his hands full.

The poker players chuckled when the scouts reported that Connolly was frantically telegraphing to his employers for instructions.

"When thieves fall out—," quoted McLaurin venomously, shuffling his chips with his remaining arm.

"Yes," said Greville. "Honest people have got a chance then."

The riders were on the mark for the big race of the meet, a dozen of them, representing the best sprinting stock in the professional ranks. Needham, Artie Greville, and Freeman for the Ajax team; Jimmy Ball and Billy Lester for the Tourists; Fahey and Francis for the Eagles; Eddie Norton and Joe Jamison for the Columbian string. Stevie Orland, his black eye smeared with pink grease paint, had a helper in the slow-beginning Phillips, and the twelfth man was Lloyd MacDonald, a few loose stitches showing where he had picked the Bullet emblem from the front of his silk riding suit. Stevie and MacDonald glared at each other as they came to the tape, and the latter muttered under his breath:

"You won't get anything!" he said.

Ten thousand excited partisans looked down upon the start, and ten thousand voices yelled when the pistol cracked and the riders pedaled slowly away from the mark. It became evident from the start that the men were following the usual system of loafing for the first half and playing for position. The riding colors shifted rapidly as the experts maneuvered their way into position. A blanket might have covered the lot as they bobbed around the first turn and headed into the short back stretch.

MacDonald swung in toward the rail at the crack of the gun. Stevie was shuffled into a position directly behind

his former teammate, and Jimmy Ball, seeing this, half lapped MacDonald's rear wheel.

"Not taking a single chance," thought Ball. "He'll never get out of there!"

At the end of the first two laps, the pace began to increase automatically. MacDonald, glued to the pole, was setting the clip, half a wheel's length in front of Ball, Needham, and Fahey, who were riding nearly abreast on the outside of the pacemaker. The others, closely bunched, were pinning Stevie in the pocket, every rider alert for the first move.

During the third lap, Stevie, who had been hanging on MacDonald's rear tire, dropped back slightly, but not enough to allow any one else to cut in on the pole ahead of him. For a time, the riders who had him lapped thought it was his intention to drop to the rear and attempt the impossible feat of sprinting around his field.

MacDonald, humped over his handle-bars, kept close watch on Needham and Ball; but, as he headed down the stretch at the end of the third lap, he found time to hurl a taunting remark over his shoulder.

"You'll do well to-day!" he said. "But you'll need a balloon!"

Stevie's response to this sneering remark was astounding. In the flash of an eye he leaped into his sprinting gait, driving his wheel straight ahead on the pole. At the same instant MacDonald's legs began to fly. Ball and Needham, caught napping by the fraction of a second, were four feet behind the big Californian when he reached the steep lower turn. Those outside, Stevie sheered wildly to escape a collision; but, just as his front tire seemed to graze MacDonald's rear wheel, Mac swerved upward from the pole, and Needham, Ball, and Fahey were carried with him. Stevie, already at top sprint, swept through the gap like a white streak, and flashed into the lead.

There was no time to study over the situation and wonder what had happened. Stevie was in front and on the pole, and, when Orland was anywhere

within striking distance in the last quarter, it took riding to catch him. One sharp yell of dismay went up from the rearguard, and Needham, Ball, and Fahey began to ride for their lives, MacDonald sprinting with them.

Around the oval whirled the white-clad leader, holding the pole and saving the last inch. Needham, riding like a crazy man, tore past MacDonald and set out to close the gap. And for all the rest nothing better than third money was in sight.

Tommy rode as he never rode before, with ten thousand maniacs to cheer him on. On the last turn he lapped Stevie's rear wheel, but that was the best he was destined to do that day. Stevie had been saving something for the last fifty yards, and in the greatest whirlwind finish of the season, he led the Ajax star to the tape by a wheel's length.

And Mac—crafty old Mac, with the Bullet emblem picked from the front of his riding suit—beat Jimmy Ball a nose for third money.

The demonstration in the dressing rooms assumed the proportions of a mob scene. MacDonald, in his bath robe, stepped out in the passageway and addressed the gathering.

"Combined against us, did you?" he said. "A fine lot of burglars you are, eh, Stevie?"

"You bet!" said Stevie from the doorway.

"Well, don't frame up any more combinations to skin us," said MacDonald severely, "because the next time we pull a fake fight for your benefit, I may have to kill Stevie to make it look good. Pipe that shiner I gave him!"

"Well," said Stevie philosophically, caressing his injured optic, "I'll take a black eye any day for two thousand bones!"

Then the reunited Bullet team stepped back into the dressing room and locked the door.

Needham looked at Ball, and Ball looked at Norton, and Norton looked at Fahey.

"Then all that fight stuff was a stall!" said Fahey.

"Are you just getting onto it?" said Billy Lester savagely. "A fine rummy you are! I tumbled the minute I saw Mac carrying you fellows wide on the turn. And he got away with one of the

oldest tricks in the business! That's what makes *me* sore!"

The riders looked at each other with open mouths.

"Pass the cold cream, fellers," said Eddie Norton. "We've been stung again!"

They are talking baseball already! You'll see some of the BIG LEAGUERS in action in a fortnight in the next POPULAR. Van Loan begins his NEW SERIES OF BASEBALL STORIES in that issue, first May number, on sale April 7th, and you will get at least one baseball yarn in every number throughout the season



A SWINDLE THAT PAID

UNITED STATES SENATOR BORAH claims that his State of Idaho is so good that even the people who get cheated within its smiling domain make money by the transaction. On his way home from Washington after the adjournment of the last session of Congress, he was introduced on the train to an Eastern woman who immediately began to tell a long, sad story about the robberlike practices of Western people in general, and Idaho men in particular.

"My husband was a traveling man," she explained, in lachrymose voice, "and one night in Boise City some of your people gave him too much to drink, so much in fact, that he didn't know what he was doing. The next morning he waked up and discovered that he had bought fourteen hundred dollars' worth of mining stock at four cents a share. Think of that, the greatest outrage I ever heard of! I have never even looked up the mine in which the stock was sold, but the experience has taught me that Western promoters are merely burglars. My poor, dear husband was robbed as surely as if those men had held him up at the point of a gun."

Mr. Borah asked the name of the mine, and she told him. Without saying a word, he picked up a newspaper and pointed to the stock quotations. Right there that Niobe-like woman got the shock of her life. The stock was shown to be worth one hundred and forty thousand dollars that day.



TOO MUCH PRONUNCIATION

SENATOR TILLMAN piloted a constituent through the Capitol one day, and, after showing him the sights, led him in to the public gallery of the Senate. After about an hour had expired, the visitor went up to the gallery doorkeeper, and exclaimed:

"My name is Swate. I am a friend of Senator Tillman's, and he brought me here. I thought I would tell you this so that I could get back into the gallery after I have my lunch."

"That's all right," said the doorkeeper, who was a solemn and impressive person. "But I may not be here when you get back. In order to prevent any mistake, I will give you the password, which will entitle you to admission."

Mr. Swate's eyes bugged out at this, and he seemed astonished.

"What's the word?" he asked.

"Idiosyncrasy."

"What?"

"Idiosyncrasy."

"I guess I'll stay in," said Swate.

Songs of the Great Lakes

By Berton Braley

The Fresh Guy

HE said he could lick any deck hand
That ever had handled a swab,
He said he could trim any sailor
That ever was seen on the job,
He said that the watchman was only a dub,
An' the first engineer was a slob.
In fact, he was fresh as you're likely to find,
An' we was just thristin' fer one of his kind!

The watchman was known as a slugger,
The deck hands was devils to fight,
The wheelsman, in port, as amusement,
Went around lickin' bouncers at night,
An' the skipper an' mates they was terrors
That used to scare most guys at sight.
But the new man opined that they all was a
bluff,
An' he hoped that he wouldn't have need to
be rough.

So we worked a few funny ones on him,
(No more than just liftin' the lid),
But he says to us: "Brethren, I'm thinkin'
Yer wheels is beginnin' to skid.
I said I could clean up this outfit,
I'll be durned if I don't"—an' he did!
An' next time we haze any landlubber scamp
We'll see that he isn't no middleweight
champ!

Prisoners

SURE, we're allus kickin' an' a-roarin' an'
a-fussin',
Hollerin' our heads off at the jobs we got
an' all,
All the time complainin' at the way the mate
is cussin',
Knockin' all the season from the spring-
time to the fall.

Grub ain't nothin' extra, an' the pay is
pretty rotten,
Work is mighty heavy an' the bunks is
awful hard—
But when we thinks of quittin', all the kicks
is plumb forgotten,
An' the Lakes is callin' to us like a com-
rade er a pard.

Yes, I think I'm gettin' weary of the workin'
on the water,
I longs fer home an' happiness upon the
solid shore;
But the minute I'm in harbor, though I know
I hadn't oughter,
I'm hankerin' to ship again exactly as be-
fore.
I dreams about the breezes on a good old
Erie freighter,
Them cool an' bracing breezes—how good
they makes you feel!
I dreams about the stokers sweatin' near the
ventilator,
An' I dreams about the cookee as he
rings us to a meal.

I dreams about the throbbin' of the engines,
an' the churnin'
Of the water from the motion of the
steady whirlin' screw.
I kin hear the cards a-slappin' an' kin smell
the pipes a-burnin',
As the boys is playin' pedro when the
daily shift is through.
I kin hear the waves go thumpin' an' the
steerin' engine creakin',
I kin feel her climbin' combers an' the way
she sags an' shakes;
An' I clean fergits the comfort an' the ease
I think I'm seekin',
An' it's me to find a freighter an' go back
upon the Lakes.



The Adventures of Hector Spinks

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "The Serles Case," "In the Dark," Etc.

Given a man like Hector Spinks, who takes to adventure as a boy to the circus, there is apt to be a strenuous time wherever he hangs his hat. The fact that he is buried in the byways of New Jersey doesn't at all mean that humdrum things are going to happen. On the contrary, there is a whirlwind of action. It is a brisk, racy yarn, with some mystery in it, some romance, considerable humor, and the atmosphere of the country.

(A Two-part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

MR. HECTOR SPINKS awoke with a vague premonition that something was wrong. His dreaming had been troubled, and permeated at intervals with sharp physical pain.

On the roof of the fast freight where he had spent the night, he sat up, blinking at the early morning sun and wiping the sleep from his eyes. Then another acute pain took him, and his suspicions became vital realities. A burly, red-haired brakeman was standing behind him, calmly chewing tobacco and kicking with mechanical regularity, as if mildly desirous of discovering what Mr. Spinks was composed of.

"Hey, come alive! I thought you was stuffed," exclaimed the brakeman as Spinks sat up. "Last stop! All out, young feller!"

"I believe you were kicking me," said Spinks.

"Seems to me I was, now that I come to think of it," replied the brakeman. Then probably to satisfy himself that Spinks wasn't stuffed, he indulged in another hearty effort. "There!" he exclaimed, with satisfaction. "Now beat it, young feller, and don't let me catch

you here again! We've had enough trouble with hobos like you, and I've a good mind to have you jailed for ridin' freight. Get a move on! We pull out in a minute."

"Thanks for the information," said Spinks. "Look here," he added, striving to kindle a human spark of understanding in the other's metallic eye, "it won't be any harm for me to remain here until we reach Jersey City—"

"No, it won't; for you ain't goin' to stay here, see?" interrupted the brakeman, with pertinent logic.

"But I've just got to stay here!" exclaimed Spinks. "In fact, I'm entitled to remain, for I've paid by physical discomfort, not to mention the damage done my trousers. Now, supposing you were in my place—"

"But I ain't. 'Nuff said. Bums is bums and rules is rules. Are you goin' to step off or ain't you?"

Spinks eyed the brawny figure of the other; then the ground, that seemed very far beneath him. "I'm always a man of peace," he said. "Is there no chance of arbitrating this matter? My uncle is vice president of the Jersey Union, and if you'll only wait until we reach the terminal—"

"That's what they all say," replied the

other. "Ain't it kinda funny there's so many of the officers ridin' freight instead of Pullman? I'll have to mention it to the board of directors at the next meetin'. Mebbe they'll put on a special for all you wanderin' relations; eh?"

He seemed so sincerely anxious for comment on this suggestion that Spinks was decoyed into replying that it appeared a brilliant and even necessary one. Whereupon, the brakeman promptly kicked him again and called him a "fresh guy," adding the advice that he'd better beat it while his shoes were good.

Spinks, with admirable fortitude and grace, yielded to the inevitable. "You didn't happen to see two gentlemen patronizing, like myself, the humble roof of this train?" he asked, preparing to alight.

"If you mean a couple of bums like yourself, they was throwed off ten miles back."

"Thrown hard?"

"Very," grinned the brakeman. "They put up a kick, but I put up a better—"

"I imagine you did," nodded Spinks. Laboriously he descended the iron ladder between the cars, the brakeman following. As he alighted on the cinder roadbed, the cars gave a jolt, signifying the engine had returned from the water tank, on a siding.

"I'm glad you didn't wait to be throwed off," said the brakeman, swinging aboard as the freight pulled out, "for you're too fresh a guy to be spoiled all of a sudden. You want to be killed slowly. Them two bums you was speakin' of, got theirs first because they was next the caboose. You was wise in gettin' up next the engine."

"So long!" he added as the train gathered momentum. "No hard feelin's, I hope. Tell your uncle, the vice president, I done my dooty regardin' bums. 'He seen his dooty, and he done it.' That's me every time. My name's Smithe. Yep, Bill Smithe, of Through Freight Twenty-sixty. Yep, Smithe, and don't forget to spell it with an 'e.'"

"I won't," replied Spinks, waving a gracious farewell. "I'll remember you, Mr. Smithe."

Some distance down the track was a small, weather-beaten house, which Spinks, from an intimate if brief knowledge of rural localities, diagnosed as a station. This was the only building in sight, and, but for the miles upon miles of track stretching north and south, flanked by its semaphores and endless procession of telegraph poles, the only evidence that humanity had even penetrated this waste place of the earth.

All else was thickly wooded fields. But, as he neared the station, Spinks discerned a road of characteristic red clay that bisected the Jersey Union's right of way. Twin white arms, pointing skyward, were supposed to guard this grade crossing, and there was a dirty white signpost bearing the legend:

LOOK OUT FOR THE LOCOMOTIVE!
STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!

Spinks, being a law-abiding citizen, obediently did all three, but the only result was the twitter of birds and the far-off, raucous voice of a crow. Underneath the behest concerning the mythical locomotive was the satisfying information that a flagman was on duty from seven in the morning until four in the evening, Sundays excepted; and Spinks for the first time thought of consulting his watch. Such is the force of habit that he had searched his pockets before recollecting that the time-piece was reposing in a Camden pawnshop.

"As the flagman isn't on duty, it mustn't be seven yet," he thought, squinting at the sun. "I wonder what's the name of this paradise—Ah, Farmington, eh?" as his eyes met the sign decorating the station. "Farmington? A pleasing Arcadian name suggestive of hot coffee and trimming, which would be extremely salubrious at present. Wonder how far I am from Jersey City and a slant at civilization."

From his pocket he unearthed a folder of the Jersey Union, and ran his finger down the column. Opposite Farmington was a cabalistic letter; and Spinks, from long grappling with that intricate, inchoate matter known as

a time-table, gathered that this was a flag station, trains only stopping on request. "Don't blame them," he commented. "I wouldn't even do that."

After some mental gymnastics, he evolved the fact that Jersey City was at least sixty miles distant, and there was also the cheering knowledge that he had absolutely no idea of how he was going to get there. "Unless some freight is misguided enough to stop at the water tank and the train crew is stone blind," he qualified. "This road certainly owes a member of the illustrious Spinks family some kind of transportation; and, by Jinks, I'm going to pocket pride and hold up the first train that comes this way! I'm getting hungry."

With this determination, he marched upon the deserted station. He tried the locked door and peered through the musty windows. "What do they do—sleep in the daytime?" he mused. "This suffering Jersey shore is the limit."

He tried a window, and it ascended with a protesting shriek that evicted a comfortable family of spiders and other Farmington fauna. Careful of his trousers, he climbed over the sill and entered the room.

The station was a humble affair. The plain pine walls were placarded with schedules, excursion notices, and advertisements in general of questionable vintage. A stern, rugged stove, similarly stricken in years, occupied the center of the room. It was red in spots, as if blushing for its environment. A locked door and a half-oval window designated the abode of the station agent when he condescended to labor.

All this Spinks ignored, heading for a distant corner, where his keen eyes had singled out two flags, one red, the other green. "I don't know if it's good form to flag a freight with green," he thought, "but I'm taking no chances of missing even a string of flats. I'll use both. That should fetch 'em."

Delighted with this idea, he emerged and planted the flags squarely in the middle of the northbound track. This done to his entire satisfaction, he returned to the platform, seated himself

on the bench, pushed back his hat, and gave himself over to thought.

He was awakened by a curious falsetto noise which dovetailed with his dreamings—that a menagerie had broken loose, and he was taking the high places with a red-and-green lion imperiling his trousers—Spinks, not the lion's—at every leap.

Opening his eyes, he saw a long, leathery individual in shirt sleeves, who was hopping about, every muscle in his face twitching, while he waved the flags and shouted at the top of his lungs all the bad words in the dictionary, though he seemed careful not to blaspheme. A bicycle standing against the station testified to the manner of his arrival.

"Gee, but you're funny!" exclaimed Spinks, with admiration and open wonder. "Say, do it again, will you? You could get booked on the circuit for that knockabout stunt. Honest, uncle. Take it from me, for I know—"

"You gosh-dinged, gol-blatted, ding-busted, durn, thunderin' fool!" piped the other, waving the flags periously near Spinks' head. "What in tarnation do ye think you're doin', hey? Are ye plumb crazy? I'll have the law onto you, young feller; and right smart, too! What do ye mean by a-bustin' into the station and puttin' them flags there—a-plannin' wreck and ruin to the road?" And Mr. Jason Blow, flagman, station agent, real-estate operator, magistrate, senior warden, hotel proprietor, and undertaker ejected his quid of plug cut and glared at Spinks.

"You dast to put that red flag there when there was no danger—"

"There was a danger of missing my train," politely explained Spinks. "Isn't this a flag station? Well, as you weren't here, I had to do your work. You should thank me instead of getting peeved."

"I should, hey?" piped Mr. Blow. "I'll have the law onto you; that's the pay you'll get—choppin' wood for the county. Bustin' into the station—"

"Well, if you'd left the door open, I wouldn't have busted. I've been greatly inconvenienced by your lack of foresight," complained Spinks. "I don't

like climbing through windows. This station and service are for the public—yes? Well, then, why isn't there a man here to attend to business——”

“Because there ain't no business to attend to, ye durn fool!” piped Mr. Blow. “And I 'don't want no fresh young city feller tryin' to learn me my business, nuther! This station's only open certain hours, and that's all I'm paid for.”

“We must see to this,” said Spinks gravely. “I'll speak to my uncle about it.”

“What?”

“I said I'd speak to my uncle about it. He's Henry Spinks, vice president of this road.”

Mr. Blow, contrary to expectations, gave a yellow-toothed laugh. “Well, well, young feller, is that so now?” His facial muscles twitched, and his hands and feet jerked about in the eccentric manner that had called forth the other's admiration and wonder. “Every city feller takes me for a durn fool,” he added. “Every dead beat that's dumped here tries to hand me that story about bein' related to the vice president. It's a wonder ye wouldn't think of something fresh.”

Spinks smiled. “Pardon the anxiety of a bride. Say, how long do I wait here for a through train to Jersey City?”

“Depends how durn a fool ye be!” piped the other. “A lifetime, I reckon, from the looks of ye. This road don't run to Jersey City; never did and never will.”

“What?”

“Mebbe you'll get your uncle, the vice president, to build a spur,” added Mr. Blow. “This is the Shore Division, young feller, and the last boat train was run yesterday; consequent there ain't no reg'ler passenger traffic till next summer——”

“But, great glory! this is Farmington, isn't it? Well, I doped it out on the menu that the next train is due in half an hour——”

“There's two Farmingtons,” said Mr. Blow. “One on the Shore Division,

t'other on the main line. You got the wrong one.”

“But how do the poor people get out of this hole if there aren't any trains except in summer?” expostulated Spinks.

“There ain't no poor people here, young feller, for all the city folks is gone,” piped Mr. Blow. “We run mostly nothin' but freight, switchin' onto the main line farther up. Those as wants to travel uses the main line—it crosses at Branchville about ten miles up. For a nephew of the vice president, I reckon you don't know much about this division.”

“But isn't there some kind of a town around here?”

“Farmington's about three mile back,” said Mr. Blow, jerking a spavined thumb over his shoulder.

“What? I should think you'd have the station nearer the town.”

“We reckoned it was better to have it by the railroad,” piped Mr. Blow. “Say, I've been tryin' to size you up, young feller. You're almighty fresh, but you don't look like the usual run of hobos. What are you, anyway?”

“I'm an angel,” said Spinks, flapping his arms up and down, the better to illustrate his meaning. “On the side, I was also one of the Wonderful Hellespont Trio——”

“None of that swearin', young feller!” reproved Mr. Blow. “There ain't never no occasion for cuss words. I'm Jason Blow, senior warden in the First Episcopal Church of Farmington——”

“Honored, sir, honored,” said Spinks, grasping the other's limp, leathery hand. “I respect your principles, Mr. Blow, and long may they wave, sir. But I wasn't swearing. Hellespont is my professional name——”

“Sonny, you'll never prosper with a name like that.”

“I guess you're right, uncle. I was dead against it from the start, for in our turn there's nothing remotely suggestive of the classic fish pond. But my fellow Thespians are boneheads, and didn't know hell—I beg your pardon—from the side of a ham. They liked the name, and that settled it. We didn't prosper,

as you inferred, and, lo! I, the angel, became the goat. Yes, I was an angel." And Spinks again flapped his arms.

During this monologue—so much Sanskrit to the audience—a variety of expressions had flitted over the station agent's twitching face; suspicion, doubt, and at length certainty. "I've placed you!" he exclaimed, advancing upon Spinks. "You're one of these crazy fellers from the lunatic asylum. Let's take a little walk, sonny—"

"Back up!" said Spinks. "I'm not crazy, but I'll bet you are—"

"Of course I am," agreed the other. "Come on, sonny. Let's take a nice little walk. Ain't you hungry—"

"Yes; so hungry that I've a good mind to eat you, though you look a mighty tough old rooster."

Mr. Blow retreated a step and looked mildly alarmed.

"Fo, fe, fi, fum!" said Spinks, sniffing the air. "Plenty of bone with good raw meat on it! I like it raw. I eat 'em alive. I'm Bosco, the snake eater!"

"No, now there ain't no occasion for vi'lence," said Mr. Blow, warily eying the other. "I ain't wishful to do you no hurt; but you're coming along with me—"

"I tell you I'm not insane!" shouted Spinks, in such stentorian tones that Mr. Blow almost collapsed. "I haven't escaped from an asylum! I'll leave it to any ~~one~~—appealing to the landscape—" "if you don't look more of a bug than I do. If you aren't crazy, you ought to be!"

"You can't fool me, young feller, and you're going back. You're a menace to the community. Come along peaceable now!" He gripped the other firmly by the arm and swung him about.

Hector Spinks was not a member of the Wonderful Hellespont Trio for nothing; and now, despite his slight frame and mild manner, he resisted to such good purpose that Mr. Blow presently found himself essaying the ambitious feat of standing on his ear.

Shouting that Spinks was a "crazy man," the station agent presently arose and dashed into his office, emerging with a venerable pistol that looked as if

it might have seen service during the War of Independence.

Spinks, however, did not wait to see the weapon's efficiency tested. He took a flying leap onto Mr. Blow's bicycle, and pedaled up the clay road as fast as the small sprocket would revolve. Mr. Blow, weapon in hand, pursued, and, in order to properly advertise what had transpired, shouted "Fire!" at the top of his lungs.

Then Mr. Blow tripped and sprawled his full length in the dust. The ancient weapon exploded, and Spinks, never once looking backward, continued his mad career until he disappeared over a hill in the middle distance.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Blow's bicycle, like its owner, had seen better days; and Spinks, his legs draped over the handlebars, was blithely coasting down a hill, when, without warning, both forks snapped, and the youngest member of the Wonderful Hellespont Trio settled in a convenient ditch.

"In case of pursuit, I better get rid of this prehistoric velocipede," he thought, scrambling to his feet, hopping about on a twisted ankle, and viewing the wreck. "That gay old rooster back there will charge me with theft if I know anything. Wonder where I am and where he is? It's a pity he hasn't some work that would keep his mind off himself."

With these tributes to Mr. Blow, he carried the totally ruined wheel into an adjacent field, carefully covering it over with shrubbery and undergrowth. He now discovered that the tumble had accomplished more than mere superficial damage to his clothes, for the pain in his ankle became so insistent and intense that he was forced to sit down. Further efforts convinced him that the foot had gone completely, if temporarily, out of commission.

"This looks like a hard-luck morning," he thought, propping himself against a fence by the wayside. "I never knew so much could happen before breakfast. Wounded in the wilds

of Jersey, and without a cent for freedom or sustenance! I might as well wait for the old rooster to come hopping along. Anyway, they feed you in jail."

For the past few months Spinks' life had been rather unsettled, with sound and prolonged sleep a negligible factor; and now, despite his physical ailments, the early morning sun shone so benignly, the flowers smelled so sweetly, the birds twittered such a convincing lullaby that, for the second time in that eventful morning, he gently dozed off into sound slumber.

This time his dreamings were superb. No shooting pains or cross-country runs, pacemaking for red-and-green lions. No, he was wallowing in romance; dreaming of bewitching eyes and hair; of soft, elusive, fascinating hands and caressing whispers chanting the litany of love.

He rolled over with a luxurious sigh, abandoning himself to this delightfully realistic dream. He could feel the loved one's breath. Ah, she had kissed him! The pressure of her lips lay warm against his own—

He sat up with yearning arms and beatified expression. A murderous-looking bulldog with hammered-in features was licking his—Spinks'—face.

"A—r—r—g'wan, get out of here!" roared Spinks, thoroughly disillusioned. "What do you take me for, anyway? I'm thin, but I ain't a bone."

"G—r—r!" said the black bull, startled by the slumberer's abrupt awakening.

"G—r—r! yourself," said Spinks. "But no hard feelings, old screw-tail. You see before you a disillusioned lover; but, anyway, let's be friends."

The bull, verifying his first and correct impression that here was a true lover of his tribe, promptly approached and beamed upon Spinks, manifesting his good will and understanding by all those advances practiced by the élite and *hoi polloi* alike of dogdom.

Spinks was deep in an exchange of confidences with his new friend, when a shrill whistle and distant cry of "Beppo!" resounded from a bend in the road, and presently a touring car

came into view. It was progressing at a slow, inquiring pace, as if its occupants—a young man at the wheel and a fair-haired girl in the tonneau—were searching for something.

This something was the French bull, for, on spying his owners, he looked perturbed and crestfallen, like a little child caught in mischief and fearing punishment; and he attempted to hide behind Spinks.

The car had now stopped before the latter, and the heavy-jowled youth was scowling ferociously at the dog. "Come here!" he snapped, the promise of a hearty kick in his voice. "Come here, I tell you!"

The bull flattened his bat ears, but did not budge.

"Let go of that dog, can't you?" exclaimed the youth, transferring his scowl to Spinks. "Give him a kick and send him here!"

The girl now interfered. "No one's holding him," she said reprovingly. "How can you expect him to come when you speak that way? He's afraid of you—"

"I'll knock the tar out of him yet; see if I don't!" muttered the agreeable young man. "Good-for-nothing, insolent beast! I've got something else to do than humor such trash!"

The girl ignored him, and, leaning over, coaxed: "Beppo, Beppo, come here like a good dog. You aren't going to be punished. I promise you faithfully. Come here, won't you?"

Beppo vibrated his screw tail, but refused to move. His rolling, pop eyes plainly said that, however he loved the girl, he wasn't taking chances of coming within range of her companion's foot. Not if he knew it!

"If I have to get down after that brute, I'll teach him!" said the agreeable youth, purpling. "I'll show him who's his master! What do you humor him for? He's spoiled."

Evidently, for the sake of appearances, the girl bit back a sharp rejoinder and opened the door. Before she could alight, however, Spinks had lifted Beppo bodily, limped forward, and deposited him in the tonneau.

"Oh, thank you so much," she said, flushing, "but you shouldn't have done it, for Beppo doesn't like strangers. He might have bitten you——"

"Wouldn't have been the first time we've been sued for damages," said the agreeable youth, favoring Spinks with a hard stare.

"He's never bitten any one that didn't deserve it!" exclaimed the girl. "I wish he'd bite you——" As if ashamed of losing her temper before a stranger, she turned to Spinks, and added gently: "You've had an accident? I see you can hardly walk. Won't you let us take you wherever you're going?"

"That's awfully kind of you," said Spinks; "but I'd hate to trouble you that way——"

"It's no trouble at all, and I hope you won't look at it that way. You may have to wait here a long time before a rig passes."

"You make refusal impossible," he said, returning her smile. "I'm going to Farmington—West Farmington, I suppose you'd call it, for I've just come from the other one."

"Yes, it's generally called West Farmington to distinguish it from East Farmington," she smiled. "And I suppose you're stopping at the Main Street House, seeing it's the only hotel in town. Well, we'll take you over there in a jiffy——"

"Sorry, but I've got to go on," curtly announced the agreeable youth, who had listened to the dialogue with ill-concealed impatience and disfavor. "I'm not going back to West Farmington. Not on your life!"

The girl became white with mortification and anger. "Harry, for shame! You'll take this gentleman where I say." Her eyes appealed to Spinks. She tried to smile. "I'm sorry we appear so churlish, but you will come, won't you——"

"I'll be very happy, indeed," said Spinks heartily, stepping into the tonneau at her side and blandly smiling into Harry's enraged eyes. "You've saved me an awful lot of trouble, for I can't navigate very well."

Harry flung his big shoulders about,

muttered a great deal in an uncomplimentary sotto voce, swore at the clutch, and finally, making the worst of the inevitable, swung round the car and set off at a furious pace, as if bent on sending Spinks to a tragic and untimely death.

Under such conditions conversation proved difficult, yet Spinks and the girl managed to sustain a lively dialogue that never approached personalities. He did not make the mistake of attempting to introduce himself, and they spoke chiefly of dogs and dogdom, and finally of those subjects—art, music, and literature—which, though impersonal, give such a hint of one's true character. He found her both entertaining and instructive, owning a happy knack of expression, and a wit and wisdom usually foreign to one of her evident years.

He was sorry when Farmington was reached, and, in an unwonted burst of glory, he was whirled up to the Main Street House, a rambling structure, situated, as its name implied, on the principal business thoroughfare of the town. It was now half past eight, and several gentlemen, presumable drummers, decorated the front porch and meditatively excavated with frayed toothpicks.

Spinks thanked his good Samaritan, received a black scowl from Harry, which he returned with a sweet smile; and a yelping farewell from Beppo, who was extremely reluctant to part from this new friend that had extricated him from an unpleasant situation. For the girl had explained that the French bull had run away that morning, a pastime to which he seemed addicted when the loutish Harry was unduly in evidence; a corollary Spinks had deduced himself. He wondered where the girl lived, and what relation the heavy-jowled youth bore to her. Perhaps they lived here in West Farmington, for certainly they had come from that direction.

As for himself, he must eat somewhere, funds or no funds, and this hotel would do as well as any other. Of late, jumping board bills had become mere daily routine, and now, not in the least perturbed, he entered with the manner of a capitalist, striving hard not to limp

or convey the fact that he was but a rescued victim of an accident.

Behind the small desk there reposed a magnificent object that, at first glance, appeared to be an enterprising tailor's dummy. He was a sandy-haired young man, with a retreating forehead and garbed in the most resplendent and ultrafashionable clothes. Displaying a diamond ring to the best advantage, and with a bored air, he whirled the register, dipped pen in ink, and tendered it to the waiting Spinks. Despite the rather shabby surroundings, there was something so impressive and regal about this young man's manner that Spinks could well imagine himself in the foyer of a Broadway hotel.

"Suite, sir?" said the clerk deferentially. "I can give you what we term our official suite. When the State officials drop in——"

"I'm not one of them," explained Spinks, gratified at this reception. "I just want a room. If I decide to remain longer——"

"Very good. And how is little old Noo York?" said the other confidentially, making certain cabalistic signs on the ledger as Spinks signed his name. "I feel lost the minute I leave Broadway. When you're city bred, country ways is awful. But, then, Noo York's pace is a killer, and we must get away for recooperation," winking. "Of course, that's all that keeps me here. The doctor says: 'Mr. Flannel, my boy, this won't do. Popularity is all very well, but you've got to get off Broadway for a spell——'"

"Yes, I just want a room," repeated Spinks.

"Very good. Front!" cried Mr. Flannel, smiting the gong and glaring at nothing in particular. "Front! Front!"

This maneuver proving entirely unproductive of result, Mr. Flannel proceeded to call for James, and James neglecting to appear, Peter was summoned. Then Arthur, John, and William.

"Where are those boys!" exclaimed Mr. Flannel, greatly astonished and incensed.

After further vocal efforts, a small

colored boy, in a faded blue uniform, emerged from an obscure recess.

"Take this gentleman up to fifty-three," said Mr. Flannel curtly, tendering the key. "When do you expect your baggage, Mr. Spinks? Shall we send for it?"

"Oh, you needn't bother about it," said Spinks, following the diminutive bell boy up the stairs. "Who are you —Peter or Arthur?" he asked.

"I'se de whole shootin' match, but I was done borned Alonzo Henry," confessed the other, now out of earshot from the desk. "All dat John, Willum, an' James stuff is jes' Misto Flannel's foolishness. Dere ain't nebber none here but me, an' I done got to help in de kitchen besides. But I 'specs yo'-all knows dat, Misto Spinks. Is yo'-all related to de Spinks ob de desert what I done read about?"

"No, I'm not related to that Sphinx," confessed Spinks. "That family is a good deal older one than mine. I suppose Mr. Flannel is a New Yorker?"

Alonzo sniffed and shook his head. "He's de boss' nephew, an' was done borned and rized here. He spent a week clerkin' in a Noo York hotel, an' den got fired, an' he's been dis foolish way ever since."

After a wash in the cracked hand basin with the purple sunflowers that matched the pitcher and slop jar, Spinks was escorted by Alonzo Henry to the dining room, where a red-haired girl attended to his wants. This waitress, Violet by name, inured to the wiles of drummers, regarded Spinks with a peculiarly metallic eye. There was something unpleasantly reminiscent about her.

"What is the population of this town?" asked Spinks at length.

"Look out of the window and count 'em yourself. You've got more time than me," said Violet promptly. Then, as if repeating a lesson, she rattled on in a colorless monotone: "My name's Miss Violet Smithe, and I don't answer to Little Bright Eyes, or none of them fresh pet names. I don't want to go to the show at the op'ra house, and I never eat candy what strangers try to

give me. We're having fine weather, and business is pretty good, though it might be better. I live here all the year round; but I don't want to go on the stage or visit Noo York. I'm twenty-two, attend church reg'ler——"

"But I haven't asked you your pedigree, Miss Smithe."

"I'm civil to those who are civil to me," pursued the waitress; "and I mind my own business, and expect others to mind theirs. I don't cook the food, and ain't responsible if it don't suit. I don't want any fresh young drummer——"

"But I'm not a drummer," said Spinks; "and I haven't the faintest notion of becoming familiar. By the way, don't you spell your name with an 'e'? Haven't you a brother, William Smithe, who holds a responsible position with the Jersey Union? I've been rather intimately connected with him of late."

The success of this conjecture—based upon a strong physical and even spiritual resemblance—was instantaneous and rather embarrassing.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Miss Smithe, looking hard at Spinks. "Are you Bill's friend he's been writing so much about? It ain't possible! Are you Mr. Bodely, the company detective? Well, I never!"

Before Spinks could remonstrate, she had whisked away his withered-looking breakfast, returning with a menu that made him sit up and take notice. A snowy napkin was also donated, Miss Smithe blushing and smiling coyly while she maintained a running fire of comment.

"Bill's told me all about you, Mr. Bodely," she said, "though I must say you're better looking than his description—but then I guess Bill is more handy with the couplin' pin than a pen. And to think I sized you up for a new drummer! Well, I never! But I should have knowed you by your limp—beggin' your pardon for mentioning it. Bill said you was near killed in the yards one day. If you'd only wrote you was comin'——"

"I didn't know about it," said Spinks truthfully. "My movements are rather indefinite."

"They must be," she agreed. "I understand you have to go hoppin' about from place to place after car thieves. Of course, I'm not thinkin' you come here just to see me," she added coyly, "though you did say you would. Well, do I look like my pitcher, or are you disappointed?"

"No mere picture could do you justice, Miss Smithe."

"Oh, all you men flatter so! I declare you're all alike. I ain't vain, goodness knows, and it ain't no credit to us if we was born good-lookin' or rich. That's what I always says, Mr. Bodely. Honest, I think you was awful fresh to steal my pitcher from Bill. He's been kiddin' me about it ever since. You was takin' an awful liberty with a lady——"

"Well, sincere admiration is never offensive," reminded Spinks, attacking a large steak.

"That's so," she agreed, with a becoming blush, while she toyed with her apron. "Bill wasn't sore, so I guess I needn't be. If you wasn't a gentleman, Bill wouldn't have let you keep it. He's awful partic'lar about me, being so much older—him, of course. And bein' his friend, it ain't as if you was a total stranger."

"That's how I look at it," said Spinks.

"Well, I'll forgive you this time, Mr. Bodely, but a fair exchange ain't no robbery, and it's only right I should have your pitcher?"

"Certainly—if you put it that way. I'll be delighted."

Miss Smithe went into the kitchen for more coffee, her manner testifying that an unusual event had broken the monotony of her career. "Just a gentleman friend from Noo York," she explained, with befitting dignity. "An old friend of my brother. We've been writin' each other for quite a spell——"

"What? He ain't the one you was tellin' us about? The one who stole your pitcher from Bill?" incredulously asked another waitress.

The theft of the photograph had always been regarded as a figment of Violet's sprightly imagination. For, in lieu of material masculine admirers, she had waved this mysterious, romantic New

York hero in the faces of those less fortunate friends who could own nothing but local admiration. This created some hard feeling, for Violet's admirer, credited with manifold virtues, was never subject to criticism, while the local talent were the butt of Violet's sharp and envious tongue. It was generally believed that "Mr. Bodely" was in the same class as the inimitable "Mrs. Harris"—a pure invention created solely for the purpose of explaining her maiden state.

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Bodely has really shown up, after all!" exclaimed Tilly, the other waitress. "My! I bet he's a beauty, all right," she added, running to the door and peeping at the unconscious and masticating Spinks.

"Any criticism to make?" sweetly inquired Violet, secure in the knowledge that her presumable admirer was the most gentlemanly and well-favored visitor who had ever registered at the hotel.

"His looks are all right," admitted Tilly; "but I guess you've made an awful mistake, dear—being so anxious, I suppose. His name ain't Bodely. He's been kiddin' you, Violet. His name is Spinks. He's down on the register as 'H. Spinks,' and I seen him drive up in an automobile. Mr. Flannel says Spinks is a real hot sport, and must be related to the old duck that lived in Glendale. Honest, Violet, I didn't know you'd fall that easy for such stuff."

CHAPTER III.

Miss Violet Smith was a determined soul, full of those nonmalleable qualities for which the mule is renowned. She had eagerly looked forward to the advent of Mr. Bodely, for his local materialization would forever set at rest those outspoken doubts concerning his existence; doubts to which she was by no means oblivious. Now that he had at last arrived and proven to be physically exempt from even Tilly's expert criticism, it would be extremely difficult—even impossible—to confess that she, Violet, had been betrayed by her over-

anxiety and haste; had been the victim of a cruel hoax. She who had proven immune to the wiles of the drummer, who had expressed no pity or understanding when some frailer sister "fell for the bull con," as Tilly was wont to call it.

So now, though secretly worried by Tilly's statement, Miss Smith preserved a doughty exterior, and even smiled with quiet superiority. "It's real good of you to take on so on my account," she said, "but, reelly, it ain't needed. You see, Mr. Bodely, bein' a railroad detective, has to take false names and disguises. Any one who knows anythin' knows that. Spinks is just an assumed name—"

"Oh, then he didn't come here to see you? He's here on business?" asked Angelina, a chambermaid.

"He's combinin' business with pleasure," explained Violet, with dignity.

"But what's he here for?" persisted Angelina, winking at Tilly. "Nothing ever happens here."

"I ain't so rude as to poke my nose into other people's business," said Violet, plainly intimating her example might well be followed. "I always waits until I'm told. Detectives is responsible people, and don't go shouting out their affairs—"

"Knowing him so well, I only thought he'd tell you, dear," giggled Angelina.

"And maybe he did," retorted Violet, with a toss of her fiery head. "But that don't say I've leave to tell you."

"That's right," put in Tilly. "Detectives is awful secret. I should know, for I've a cousin who married the stepson of a man whose brother was in the police force—doorman they called him. My cousin says the responsibility is awful of knowing beforehand all about these big crimes—"

"I wish you'd can that cousin of yours," said Angelina good-naturedly. "I'm reel weary hearing of her."

When Violet at length returned with the coffee, she found her presumable admirer finishing his second fried egg. The romantic waitress immediately proceeded to test Tilly's suspicions—though if they proved correct, Violet had de-

terminated the truth would never be generally known. "They was sayin' in the kitchen that you wasn't Mr. Bodely," she began, smiling sweetly. "They says your name is Spinks."

"I've more than one name," said Spinks. "I need them in my business. For instance, Hellespont is one of them."

"Oh, that's an awful swear word, Mr. Bodely! Why didn't you pick out a nice, reel Christian name? But I know gentlemen in your line has to use a lot of different names." Her fears were vanishing; "Then you're here on business—

"And pleasure," truthfully supplemented Spinks, pouring more coffee.

"I suppose you couldn't tell me what it is?" she ventured.

"No, really, Miss Smithe—"

"You may call me Vi'let. Knowing Bill as you do, it would be stuck-upish to stand on ceremony. And as a fair exchange ain't no robbery, I suppose I'll have to call you Henry," giggling nervously.

"How did you ever happen to light on the name of Spinks?" she pursued. "It's an awful funny name. I hear Mr. Flannel thinks you is related to that swell family in Glendale—"

"Is there a family by that name in the neighborhood?" He looked up with sudden interest. "Where is Glendale?"

"Five or six miles from here—"

"Inland?"

"Sure. It couldn't be east, or it would be in the ocean."

"Is that so? I'm not very well acquainted with the neighborhood—in fact, your brother was instrumental in helping me to get off here—"

"You don't mean that Bill come with you? Why, it ain't his day off."

"No, he was on duty—Through Freight Twenty-sixty, isn't it? Well, we met here quite by accident, and he assisted me materially. His train stopped for water—"

"Oh, I see. You met at Branchville, where the Shore Division connects with the main line? Ain't it funny you should meet him! And the automobile you come in—"

"Oh, that merely belongs to an acquaintance of mine. Of course, Miss—er—of course, Violet, all this is strictly *entre nous*—"

"What's that?"

"I mean my real object in being here must remain a secret between ourselves. You understand, of course?"

"Henry, my lips is sealed," said Violet impressively. "I know you wouldn't be takin' a false name unless somethin' big was up. How long was you goin' to stay?"

"That all depends on circumstances," said Spinks truthfully. "Funny there should be a Spinks family in Glendale," he mused. "Know anything about them?"

"No, nor Glendale, either, except that there's a crazy house near there, they say."

"Indeed," said Spinks, thinking of his encounter with Mr. Jason Blow. "A State asylum, or one for the criminal insane?"

"No, I guess it's private."

Spinks at length sought his room. The ankle felt somewhat better, but, mindful of Mr. Bodely's chronic infirmity, he maintained a pronounced limp when leaving the presence of Violet.

He now bathed the injured member in the purple sunflower washbasin, bound the ankle tightly with a handkerchief, and, removing his outer clothes, crawled into bed. Thoroughly weary and spent, he promptly fell asleep.

He was awakened by a confused noise in the hall that presently resolved itself into a chorus of voices, each endeavoring to rise supreme above the other. From the position of the sun—the hotel owning a western exposure—Spinks surmised he had slept at least four hours, and that now it must be in the neighborhood of two o'clock. Lacking a watch or timepiece of any description, he could not verify this conjecture.

From his window he could look down upon Main Street, with its meager collection of stores, and he now saw that the excitement progressing outside his door was evidently contagious, having communicated itself to Farmington in general. Business—such as it was—had

been temporarily suspended; knots of people were congregated on the sidewalk, and a representative gathering in particular had assembled in front of the post office. Some topic was evidently being discussed with avidity, and it presently dawned upon Spinks that the Main Street House was the center of attraction, for all eyes were turned upon it.

"Surely they're not looking at me!" thought Spinks, hastily retreating from the window where his vivid blue under-wear had been a shining target. "Wonder what's up."

Healthy inquisitiveness led him to the door, where he saw at the end of the corridor the group of battling conversationalists that had awakened him. "Ahoy, there! What's the row?" he called. "Fire, murder, or twins?"

Mr. Flannel detached himself from the group and offered explanations. "Why, there's been a row over at the East Farmington station," he said. "Mr. Blow, the station agent, has been almost murdered."

"Holy cat!" exclaimed Spinks, genuinely startled. "And by whom?"

"Well, we haven't the full details as yet," said Mr. Flannel; "but I understand it's a case of burglary. The station was broken into, and Mr. Blow surprised the thief at his work. A struggle ensued, and Mr. Blow was gaining the upper hand when he was foully shot down—."

"What? Shot down?"

"Down or up; it's all the same," said the obliging Mr. Flannel. "He is seriously wounded, and lay as he fell until discovered by a passer-by. He was taken to the doctor's, and is now being brought home—."

"When did all this happen?"

"Between seven and eight this morning. I believe Mr. Blow has given a fair description of his assailant—but he will soon be here. Such notoriety is very bad for a select hotel—."

"Do you mean to say Mr. Blow is being brought h-here?"

"Yes. You see, he is my uncle, and the proprietor of this place, though, strictly speaking, he is not a hotel man,

and I attend to all the administrative functions—"

But his audience, with a feeble excuse, had closed and locked the door. "Great watercress!" exclaimed Spinks, sinking on the bed, "to think that, of all places, I should come *here!* And just when my credit is established it has to turn out that that old rooster owns my meal ticket. Talk of hard luck! And now, instead of being a pleasant-mannered lunatic, I'm a burglar with attempted murder added to my record! For a senior warden, Mr. Blow, you're a fine liar. You've shot yourself, and, seeing a good chance of posing as a local hero, you lay it all on me. That's how I figure it out."

His first impulse was to seek the local constable and attempt to offer explanations, but second thoughts restrained him. In the first place, it was true, despite the innocent motive, that he had entered the station and gone off with the agent's bicycle. Mr. Blow was evidently a power in the town, owed Spinks a grudge, and would do his best to see that the latter suffered the maximum penalty for these offenses, which could be greatly distorted.

Mr. Blow could also have him arrested for assault; for being a vagrant and for attempting to defraud the hotel—not to mention the minor misdemeanor of flagging trains on his own responsibility.

The Wonderful Hellespont Trio had left behind them a long trail of irate landlords, boarding-house keepers, and many other injured personages, and these would add their quota. Then the "dootiful" William Smith would come forward and offer his evidence, proving Spinks to be a depraved character addicted to the habit of riding freight. Lastly, the irate and disillusioned Violet might be expected to testify that Spinks was posing as an officer of the railroad; a private detective. Fraud, false pretenses, even breach of promise might be added. This was the least that could happen to him.

And supposing Mr. Blow stuck to his story? There were no witnesses to the affair, and his word would naturally be

given preference over that of Spinks—especially when it was proven the latter was such a character.

"This changes matters," he thought regretfully. "I had better not postpone my visit to Glendale. An early supper, and I vanish. Eat while the eating is certain; that's my motto every time."

Spinks knew that thus far he wasn't suspected by a soul, and, as Mr. Blow would naturally be put to bed on his arrival, he would have no opportunity of meeting or identifying his assailant. He seated himself comfortably by the window and awaited the arrival of Mr. Blow, his mind dwelling upon those events that had led up to his present predicament.

Hector Spinks was a nephew of Henry Spinks, vice president of the Jersey Union; but he had never met the latter, nor his son Burton. Hector belonged to the poor branch of the family, was born and reared in Frisco, and this was the first time he had been east of the Mississippi. Of the wealthy Eastern branch—his Uncle Henry and Cousin Burton—he knew little if anything, other than that the former was vice president of the Jersey Union, and owned a country place in Glendale, New Jersey—wherever that might be.

The families had never corresponded, and whatever little Hector had learned of these Eastern relatives his father had told him. And his father seldom, if ever, discussed them. For, since achieving success and wealth, Henry Spinks had completely forgotten his poorer brother. There had been times in the latter's career when a helping hand would have been appreciated; but Henry never extended one or expressed any interest in his brother's welfare, and Hector's father had been much too proud and sensitive to advertise his need. He went to his grave without again seeing or hearing from his elder and only brother.

Hector had been reared in an atmosphere of comparative and chronic penury. There was bitterness toward these wealthy relatives; but it was his mother alone who offered the occasional uncomplimentary remarks. From her

he learned that his Cousin Burton was a "dissipated young whelp who squanders money, while you, my boy, will have to earn your schooling. But what can you expect from the son of such a father? Your Uncle Henry is selfish, unnatural, eccentric, and an upstart."

Hector was indifferent to these views except as they seemed to effect his mother. He treasured no ill will toward his relatives. He did not know them, and in all probability would never know them. And personally, he didn't want any help. He had youth, health, intelligence, and ambition. What more could a young boy want?

He worked from the time he was able to sell papers after school hours; worked though the high school; worked his way through college. And he had saved something besides.

Then his parents died, and, succeeding this, Hector was bitten by the sightseeing and histrionic bug. Of his Eastern relatives, he had heard absolutely nothing for over three years.

Some time after graduating from college, his long-cherished sight-seeing and histrionic aspirations found vent through a fortuitous meeting with two gentlemen, Dugan and Feldspanks, who were destined to become his partners in the theatrical enterprise that had proved such a disastrous failure.

Dugan and Feldspanks were technically known to the profession as "chasers"; that is, they played over an insignificant rural circuit of continuous vaudeville houses, and their singing, dancing, and eccentric acrobatic specialty was put on in order to clear the gallery; discourage tenacious patrons from sitting through two performances while paying but the one admission price.

Dugan and Feldspanks were uniformly successful in this undertaking, and were guaranteed to clear the most congested house in but a few minutes. But they longed for greater things; they wanted to fill houses, not empty them. With a little capital they felt they would become headliners, and thus they bent every effort toward discovering an "angel"; some verdant gentleman who

would provide the necessary capital and act as nominal treasurer of his own money.

Hector Spinks proved to be the angel; but, having been a member of his university glee club and gymnasium team, he demanded an active part in the enterprise, for he could not quite see, despite all arguments, how he could gain fame on the stage by being simply a treasurer.

Thus the Wonderful Hellespont Trio came into being, prepared to dazzle and enthuse, bewilder and amuse an eager and expectant public. Spinks, temperamentally buoyant and optimistic, was easily infected by the prognostications of financial success and undying fame promulgated by Messrs. Dugan and Feldspanks. He promptly resigned his position as cub reporter on the *San Francisco Star*, and invested all his savings in the enterprise. His partners invested nothing but their professional experience and ability, and they were none too modest about convincing Spinks that his investment was a very small price to pay for the privilege of being associated with them.

Utter and complete disaster waited upon the Trio from the first; theirs being the history of many another barn-storming company whose enterprise is based solely on optimism, ignorance, lack of ability, and restricted capital. Spinks hopefully hung on until his last dollar had been paid out, trusting for that "turn in the tide" which the rubicund Dugan was constantly predicting.

With a depleted treasury, there ensued that internecine strife that ever waits upon financial disaster. Dugan and Feldspanks laid the failure upon Spinks' appearance on the stage; and they rather thought he should put in more capital to counterbalance the discouraging effect he had upon audiences. "The turn of the tide"—always due the next minute—would be assured by more money; and Spinks, being the treasurer, was in duty bound to furnish these necessary sinews of all enterprise. They couldn't understand why he so betrayed his trust; and they rather intimated he was "holding out" on them.

This was precisely Spinks' suspicion; and he also considered himself the victim of misrepresentation. If Dugan could act as well as he drank, and if Feldspanks would only refrain from drawing money in advance—to send home to his "poor, old mother"—the enterprise might yet be a success.

Finally the Trio, in desperate straits, were reduced to the expedient of beating their way home via New York, minus excess baggage of any description. They were engaged in prosecuting this agreeable undertaking when Mr. Smithe interfered and kicked them off the freight. Dugan and Feldspanks were thus somewhere "ten miles down the track," in a like state of penury as Spinks; and, to the latter, their plight was a source of some comfort. In more than one instance they had treated him shabbily, and he was glad they had now the opportunity of acting as their own treasurer. But for Spinks parting with his watch—the last article left unpawned—the Trio would never have come as far as Camden on the return journey.

Thus adverse fate was entirely responsible for depositing Hector Spinks in the immediate vicinity of his wealthy relatives whom he had never seen; for, until kicked off the freight, he had no idea of his proximity to them; nor, until Violet Smithe mentioned Glendale, had he the remotest idea of its locality. Up to that moment no thought of visiting his relatives had occurred to him.

Now, however, he did not doubt but that the wealthy Spinks family of Glendale were, indeed, his relatives; and, in such straits, it would be only natural to preferably apply to them for assistance. Once back in Frisco, his ambition as to travel and play acting satisfied, he would buckle down to work. Though he had lost the last penny of his hard-earned savings; though misfortune, discomfort, and disillusionment had waited on the enterprise, he was in no sense discouraged or embittered. He had had adventure; he had seen every nook of God's own country, even if from the roof of a freight car; and the experience had been entertaining and broadening. Op-

timistic and self-reliant, he could cheerfully face the world with empty pockets, confident in his own inherent manhood.

Spinks had passed an hour in thus meditating, when the actions of the crowd on Main Street heralded the approach of Mr. Blow; and presently a hack drove up to the hotel, and the conquering hero, acclaimed by the populace, was assisted from the vehicle, and escorted by the police force—a distant cousin of the said Blow—was transferred to the hotel staff, headed by Mr. Flannel and Alonzo Henry, who had skillfully deployed on the veranda, as if for the purpose of being photographed.

CHAPTER IV.

It was drawing toward five o'clock when Spinks boldly limped into the dining room, bearing to Miss Smithe the information that urgent business demanded his attention.

"I know, Henry," she said, smiling mysteriously, "but my lips is sealed."

"You know what?" he inquired.

"What you was up to, Henry. I can put two and two together as well as any one. Henry, you're after that burglar who broke into the station and smashed Mr. Blow. That's what you was up to. Ain't I reel clever?"

"You certainly are," admitted Spinks. "I would never have thought of that."

Violet displayed emotion under this unqualified praise. "I hear," she added, "they're going to offer five hundred dollars reward—Mr. Blow is going to offer it all himself."

"Great, self-advertising scheme," thought Spinks. "Suppose he's running for some political office."

"What do you think of this jay burg?" presently asked Violet. "I suppose it seems reel slow after them big cities, don't it?"

"It depends how you live in them," he grinned. "City life, even at its best, isn't everything; not by any means. I was always fond of the country."

"So was I," admitted Violet. "I was born and raised here, and my folks live just around the corner; but I never had

no longings to go out into the world like Bill. I'm reel glad you like it here, Henry. I must introduce you to the folks and my bunch."

Spinks offering some incoherent comment, Violet added: "And then it's just the place for a young married couple. You can live nice and comfortable, and still have a good bit of money. I never was one for expensive tastes, Henry. Now, I know a reel elegant house you can get awful reasonable; just five hundred dollars down—Why, if that ain't the amount of the reward!" And Violet, quite overcome by this remarkable coincidence, giggled nervously and flushed to the roots of her fiery hair.

Spinks was also overcome; so much so, in fact, that murmuring some vague confession about not knowing it was so late, he hurriedly arose and, with a hasty farewell, limped with alacrity from the room. "She's an awfully good soul," he thought; "but entirely too fond of getting married. I haven't the heart to confess I'm not Bodely. It would break her all up. Why unnecessary sorrow? Let her be happy, for the real Bodely must show up some time."

Mr. Flannel had retired to his room in order to make his evening toilet—a lengthy proceeding—and his place at the desk was occupied by the protean Alonzo Henry.

Spinks, tendering his key with the observation that he was going to see about his baggage, walked out.

Whatever description of the burglar Mr. Blow had given must have been signally at fault, for Spinks created no more casual comment than that bestowed upon a presumably new drummer. Bearing in mind that Glendale lay to the westward, he faced the homing sun, and, following the broad highway that appeared to be Farmington's chief artery of travel, proceeded at a brisk pace. It was the same road he had traversed that morning; a continuation.

He had walked for perhaps half an hour, when he saw a man approaching whom he decided to stop and question concerning the exact distance to Glendale. This pedestrian, on examination,

proved to be a kindly faced, patriarchal gentleman, who, but for his sunburned straw hat and rusty black shoes, bore a striking resemblance to the late Mr. Moses of legal fame. He was walking slowly, with bowed head and clasped hands, as if deep in pious meditation.

"I beg your pardon," began Spinks, "but can you tell me——"

"I can, sir, I can," interrupted the other, looking up and waving a deprecating hand. "The sum total divided by the square root of π to the ninth power leaves precisely the ratio of the equivalent."

"But what has all this got to do with the price of putty?" grinned Spinks. "I want to know how far Glendale is."

"Pardon my neglect," said the other ceremoniously. "I live near Glendale, and it will give me great happiness to direct your steps in that quarter."

Spinks protested at occasioning so much trouble, but the other dismissed all argument. "As I live there, you will not be taking me out of my way, and it is time I returned. I devote certain hours of the evening to meditation, as you see; and my thoughts gain clarity by locomotion. The solution of perpetual motion, sir, is most illusive. Most illusive."

"You're right," said Spinks, falling into step. "I've been moving some myself."

"You are a fellow mathematician and scientist?" queried the other, his faded blue eyes lighting up while he linked a thin hand through his companion's arm. "You are devoted to the problems of the universe?"

"Well, yes, but in a strictly material way," said Spinks.

The other had relapsed into deep abstraction, but now he looked up, and said: "Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Newton. Sir Isaac Newton, discoverer of the law of gravity, of whom no doubt you've heard."

At this moment, the distant rattle of wheels was heard, and presently a cloud of dust resolved itself into a rubber-tired runabout drawn by a spirited gray mare. As it approached, Spinks saw that a slight young man enveloped in a linen duster held the ribbons, his com-

panion a short, heavy gentleman owning a Milesian cast of countenance, a brutal mouth, and a squint eye.

Spinks stepped aside to permit the vehicle to pass, but the mare halted, obedient to a slight pressure on the reins. Sir Isaac Newton by this time was exhibiting signs of considerable perturbation.

"Whiskers, me bhoy," said the squint-eyed gentleman as he dismounted and eyed the reincarnation of the illustrious scientist, "what d'ye mane by breakin' th' rules? Whist now, but upon me wor-rd ye're worse nor anny young divvil to look affer."

Sir Isaac appeared unable to utter a word. His old knees were trembling, and he cowered back behind Spinks.

"Come along wid ye," roughly ordered the squint-eyed man. "Jump in, or O'll be affer t'achin' ye what it manes to be runnin' aff loike this."

"B-but I don't want to go back," protested the other, backing away. "I don't like it there. Really, I don't. I want to go home. I'm of no harm to anybody, and I want to go home. I want to go home."

"Do ye, now?" asked the other, a satiric glint in his squint eye.

"Come, no nonsense!" sharply warned the man in the runabout. "Mulligan, don't argue, but do your duty."

At this, Mr. Mulligan suddenly made a rush at Sir Isaac, but the latter nimbly evaded the huge, hairy paw, and, squealing like a rabbit, scuttled off down the road.

Mulligan, with alarming agility for one of his bulk, darted after, overtook Sir Isaac in a few swift strides, and, catching him by the collar of his shabby coat, soundly cuffed his ears.

"Shame!" cried Spinks, running forward. "For shame, you big, overgrown coward! Take your hands off at once!"

The man in the runabout alighted, while Mulligan, still gripping Sir Isaac, ceased his castigations, and glared at Spinks in paralyzed astonishment, as if unspeakably outraged by the presumptuous interference. "Hould yer jaw,

young felly!" he finally bellowed. "Ye'll be afther moindin' yer own businss, or Oi'll be t'achin' ye!"

Spinks was white, but he glowered back into the squint eye. "You're a coward and a brute!" he repeated. "And don't you dare lay a hand on that man."

Mulligan, dragging Sir Isaac by the collar as if he were a rag doll, advanced, and held a collection of knuckles under Spinks' nose. They were huge, lumpy, red knuckles; and the tightly drawn skin appeared as if it had been thoroughly pickled in vinegar and salt. It resembled an alligator's hide, and, on the whole, the fist looked as if it could ably split cement. "Wan wor-*rd* more!" pleaded Mr. Mulligan, completely closing the squint eye and still holding aloft the fist for Spinks' careful inspection. "Just wan wor-*rd* more, me foine buck!"

"Here! there's no necessity for any row," sharply exclaimed Mulligan's companion, advancing. He was thin and sallow-faced, with a hard and furtive eye that was full of bile. "This fellow," he added, designating Sir Isaac, "is an escaped lunatic. I am Doctor Scale, the house physician, and this man"—nodding at Mulligan—"is an orderly performing his duty——"

"Well, I call it a pretty rotten duty for a grown man to beat a poor old fellow like that!" exclaimed Spinks. "There's no call for it."

"There is call for it," contradicted Scale, with ill-concealed irritation. "He's a dangerous lunatic, and there's no occasion for outside interference or advice. We know our business if you don't."

"Well, I propose to look into this business," said Spinks, favoring the doctor with a hard stare. "Mucker play, I call it. I'm going to find out by what right and authority you let that bruiser manhandle patients. I think their relatives would be glad to know it. I'm a man of peace, but I can't stand for the kind of game you've just pulled off. Not for a minute. I'm going to make a complaint to the proper authorities."

"Go ahead and make it, then!" snapped Scale, with a sneer. "You'll get fat doing it. Come, Mulligan, bring along that patient, and don't stop to argue with the crossroads philanthropist. We haven't time."

Sir Isaac, cowed and dazed, had stood a silent audience of the dialogue, and now Mr. Mulligan, obedient to his superior's orders, gave a smile of pure joy as he shoved his prisoner with such violence as to send him to his knees; after which, Mr. Mulligan grinned and turned inquiringly to Spinks, as if desirous of knowing what he was going to do about it.

He wasn't long in finding out, for it was a provocative invitation, which Spinks promptly accepted. Consumed with anger, he forgot his small store of ring craft, and heedlessly rushed the burly Irishman.

Then a sudden and inexplicable explosion took place under the jaw of Hector Spinks, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER V.

When Spinks at length regained consciousness, the runabout, its occupants, and Sir Isaac had disappeared. He arose unsteadily, feeling as if he were all jaw, and tried to figure out how the catastrophe had happened, for Mulligan's pickled fist had traveled less than a foot, and too swiftly for the eye to see.

"I guess that fellow isn't in my class," finally decided Spinks, pursuing his journey to Glendale. "'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' And I'm an angel, too, at that. All the same, I'm not through with that bunch. Not for a minute."

After half an hour's walking, Spinks came to a high brick wall skirting the roadside, and he saw that it inclosed a white building of some pretensions, together with a stable and outhouses; the whole surrounded by graveled walks, lawns, trees, and little summerhouses. Midway of the wall's length was a large iron gate ornamented with spikes; and Spinks also noted that the top of the wall was decorated with broken glass

set in mortar—a pertinent discouragement to lawless intruders. In the dust of the road was the plain impression of carriage wheels leading through the gate, and Spinks felt that this was the private asylum of which he had heard. He studied it carefully for future reference.

Twilight had set in when Spinks finally reached the little town of Glendale and inquired his way from the first person he chanced to meet. This happened to be the letter carrier of the rural free-delivery route; and he was driving a sad-eyed roan attached to a rickety-looking vehicle in which reposed Uncle Sam's mail.

"Spinks?" said this gentleman, looking hard at his questioner while he thoughtfully expectorated. "Henry Spinks? Why, he's been dead and buried for over a year."

Spinks stared in astonishment. "What? Why— Say, I mean Henry Spinks, vice president of the Jersey Union, you know."

"Sure. So do I," said the other, unmoved. "There never was but one Spinks family in Glendale. He's dead and buried. Yes, sir, surest thing you know. Died of heart failure. I can tell you when it was, too," again expectorating. "I happen to know, 'cause we buried my wife's mother same day. Yes, sir; fourteen months come to-morrow. Giddap there, Nellie."

"Hold on," said Spinks. "Is there any one at the house? I mean Burton Spinks, for instance. The son, you know."

"No, he ain't there," said the other deliberately. "But the house ain't shut up. Folks by the name of Carrington live there. Mebbe you know 'em. Doc Carrington's been there for years. You can't miss the house; a mile straight ahead after leaving the belt-line trolley at Hopkins Avenue. Any one'll show you. Giddap there, Nellie!"

Spinks located the house without difficulty, for it was by far the most pretentious on Hopkins Avenue, or any other avenue; a great, old-fashioned structure built for solid comfort and not show. The grounds, encompassed by a

red brick wall, covered a block; and Spinks, walking through the open gates, saw that the ground floor of the house was lighted.

As he ascended the carriage drive, a hoarse bark came from the veranda, and, against the deepening twilight, the black form of a dog took shape as it launched itself from the steps. It came for Spinks at a tearing gallop.

"Beppo!" exclaimed a voice from the veranda. "Come here! Come here! Don't be afraid, sir, he won't touch you. Beppo, come here at once!"

The squat French bull, after encircling Spinks' legs and making violent snuffling noises through his wide nostrils as if he were choking to death, vibrated his wiry tail and pranced about on thick, crooked little legs.

"Well, monsieur, I certainly didn't expect to find *you* here!" greeted Spinks, patting the great, broad head. "Carrington, eh?"

He advanced to meet the girl who had played the good Samaritan that morning. Bathed in the soft light from the hall, diffused through the open door, she stood on the steps and silently awaited his approach. She wore a dark crimson dress that accentuated the splendor of her hair, the purity of neck and arm. From somewhere at the back of the house came the faint tinkle of dishes, and a rich negro voice singing. He could follow the words distinctly, and unconsciously hummed:

"Do yo' hear dem tones a-comin',
With de ole banjo a-strummin',
Why de bees dey stop dere hummin',
When dey hears 'em come along.
O'er de whole ob dis plantation
It's de cause ob a sensation,
Sweetes' music in creation
Is when Chloe sings a song!"

It was one of those rare nights in September, where a false light lends to objects a flat and artificial appearance, as if they were stage scenery. A full moon hung low in the east, and the sky was a dark, velvety blue, clean from flaw or cloud. Not a leaf stirred, though the air was clear and invigorating, and faintly reminiscent of the distant sea.

For the first time during his many

wanderings, Spinks felt suddenly and acutely homesick; felt what it meant to be friendless and alone. There was that in the glory of the night that made for sadness; for melancholy introspection; for thoughts of the past. The warm atmosphere of home that stole from the open door, the girl on the steps, the distant singing, the compelling conviction of domestic peace, happiness, and security worked upon him strangely. He felt very much the outsider; the poor and lonely child peering through the barred gate at a more fortunate stranger. For him, wherever he went, there was no such environment as this; no one to await his arrival; to greatly care about his comings and goings. His only relative in all the wide world was his Cousin Burton, whom he had never seen.

His mood passed with the girl's voice. "Good evening," she greeted. "I knew you when you spoke, but I think Beppo recognized you long before I. I hope he didn't frighten you; he is so violent even in his friendships."

There was something very natural and winning in the unaffected and friendly greeting that scorned the conventional attitude of stony unrecognition which Spinks knew so well. She was frankly acknowledging their chance meeting of the morning.

"Do you wish to see Doctor Carrington?" she added as Spinks stood with bared head.

"If you please," he returned. "I haven't a card, but my name is Spinks—Hector Spinks. The combination isn't one you'll be apt to forget, I imagine." He laughed in his unaffected way, and she smiled without quite knowing why. People often wondered what caused them to echo Spinks' laugh.

"Won't you come in?" she asked. "And how is the ankle? Better, I see."

Spinks had not been alone in the drawing-room very long before the agreeable young man whom he had also met that morning entered. He was smoking a pipe, and, hands in trouser pockets, lumbered into the room, looking surly and bored. "Well, what do you want?" he greeted. It was evident he had not recognized the visitor as yet.

Spinks laid aside the book he had been idling over and arose, the action bringing his features into the radius of a wall light.

"Oh, hello!" exclaimed the other, staring hard. "You're the Johnny with the bum ankle that got a lift to Farmington?"

Spinks nodded. "I wished to see Doctor Carrington."

"So I believe," replied the other curtly. "I'm his son. What's your line, Mr. Spinks? If it's life insurance, or you're a drummer or anything like that, you're wasting my time and your own. Nothing doing, and that's final. You shouldn't have got in here, in the first place, without stating your business."

"I'm here, Mr. Carrington, simply because I happen to be a nephew of the late Henry Spinks."

Carrington's heavy jaw dropped, and his little eyes narrowed as they coasted anew over the visitor. He had not removed the pipe or his pocketed hands. "Is that so," he commented, rather than asked. "I suppose you can prove that relationship?"

"Yes, if necessary. Why?"

Carrington laughed; an unpleasant laugh. "Oh, nothing. But it's mighty funny you should decide to turn up at this hour. Your uncle's been buried over a year. Must have thought a lot of him."

"I don't see that that's any of your business," said Spinks curtly. His first instinctive dislike for this agreeable young man was steadily increasing. "My business is with your father, not you."

Carrington glowered, and was on the point of saying something; but, with unusual self-control, turned on his heel. "He'll be down in a minute," he said gruffly. That he was thoroughly angry was apparent when, on meeting Beppo in the hall, he aimed a kick which the bull deftly dodged. Carrington swore, and Beppo swore back as he flattened bat ears and rolled up his lips.

Doctor Carrington, in appearance and bearing, proved a striking and agreeable contrast to his son. He was thin and

refined of face; his manner courtly, his voice mellow and pleasing. "My son has informed me that you're Henry Spinks' nephew," he greeted graciously, offering his hand. "Naturally your name suggested the possibility; but I've been so pestered by people wanting to sell me something I don't want, or with bogus friends and relatives of Henry Spinks, that I have to maintain a sort of quarantine purely in self-defense."

"I can understand that," laughed Spinks. "I suppose I should have stated my business, but I never thought—and then it's somewhat of a private nature." He then stated the object of his visit, saying nothing as yet concerning the misfortunes of the Trio and his lack of funds.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Doctor Carrington, "you didn't know your uncle was dead? And you live in Frisco, you say? Then what brings you here?"

So kindly was his manner that Spinks explained how he belonged to the poor branch of the family, and of how they had never been intimate. From this he was gradually led on to a narration of his late experiences, Doctor Carrington proving an agreeable and sympathetic audience.

"I never knew Mr. Spinks had a relative other than his son, Burton," he said as Spinks finished. "I knew Mr. Spinks for years, and he never mentioned you or your people——"

"I can well believe that. We knew nothing of him or his affairs. In more ways than one, we were as far apart as the Pacific and Atlantic. Even when my parents died, I never thought of notifying my Uncle Henry. I would have felt as if writing to an utter stranger. Don't think I feel embittered in any way, Doctor Carrington. We're all entitled to live our own lives, and I suppose material success is bound to make a difference."

"Generally, yes," said Carrington; "though your uncle was far from being the wealthy man people supposed him—of course, he was well off; of course; but I mean not the Croesus some people imagined. And, no doubt, whatever material success he gained had nothing

to do with his attitude. Frisco and New York are far apart, and Mr. Spinks was a very busy man. The age of letter writing has passed—it's a lost art—and much must be taken for granted."

"Yes, I understand that," said Spinks. "I repeat, his indifference meant absolutely nothing to me."

"Your uncle," pursued the other, nodding understandingly, "retired from active business life about two years before his death; gave up his New York house and life and came here—his country place—to live. Aside from being an old friend, I was Mr. Spinks' family physician, and insisted upon this change. Business worries, and those of another nature which could have been obviated, had undermined his health. He had valvular trouble of the heart, and his death, though sudden, was not entirely unexpected."

Doctor Carrington then went into details, adding: "I was made executor of the estate—such as it was—and it was left, of course, to Burton—the sole legatee—though, as a mark of our long friendship, Mr. Spinks bequeathed this property to me. That is how you come to find me here."

"And where is Burton?" asked Spinks. "I would like to meet him, now that I'm East. Doesn't he live here?"

"No," said Doctor Carrington, pursing his lips and shaking his head. "Your cousin, Mr. Spinks, has never been all he should have been, I'm sorry to say. He caused his father much worry that could have been obviated. A spendthrift and a dissipated roué, old and diseased long before his time; that's the best I can say of him. I prefer not discussing him, if you don't mind. He occasioned my old friend much needless suffering— Well, Mr. Spinks"—regaining his graciousness with an effort—"I hope you will let me act in this matter as if I were your uncle. When do you go back to the coast?"

"The sooner, the better," replied Spinks. "You see, I can find work there in Frisco, where I'm known, and it would be difficult to secure it anywhere else. I'll start to-morrow if I can."

"Then you must let me advance the necessary funds," said Carrington promptly. "I insist upon it. And you must be my guest for to-night. I won't ask you to stay longer, for I agree with you, that the sooner you get back to Frisco and to work, the better. I'm glad to see you're that kind. Yes, yes, you must let me be your friend."

"I'll be very glad to accept your help," said Spinks. "Frankly, that was my principal reason for coming here, though I didn't expect you to furnish it. I thought you could tell me where my Cousin Burton lives——"

"I know nothing about him," said Doctor Carrington.

"Well, it doesn't matter very much," said Spinks. "I'll return whatever money you advance just as soon as I'm able. It's well for me," he added, with a smile, "that you take my word for all this. I might be an adventurer, you know, and no relation of Henry Spinks."

Carrington laughed. "I'm not generally so trusting; but I've no hesitancy in accepting your word." He looked at Spinks in a kindly manner, adding: "I can trace a resemblance to my dear friend in your appearance and bearing. Now, you mustn't worry over any little trouble your adventures have brought you—I mean the matter of the station agent, and all that. I am not without influence in this county, and you are a nephew of the late Henry Spinks. You will find that that changes matters entirely."

They chatted for the better part of an hour, until Doctor Carrington said: "I will show you your room—no doubt you are tired. I breakfast alone at seven, for I must catch an early morning train to New York. Perhaps you will join me so we can go up together."

They shook hands warmly, and Spinks was conducted to his room by a negro servant. He found his every want in the shape of physical comfort anticipated.

He had seen nothing further of young Carrington or the girl, who was evidently the former's sister.

CHAPTER VI.

Spinks had no idea of going to bed, for it was but nine o'clock, and he had slept during the afternoon. He felt very much awake and somewhat restless, owing, perhaps, to the novelty of his surroundings. He had acquiesced in Doctor Carrington's suggestion through politeness, and because he feared the doctor might wish to retire or have some more important or agreeable occupation than entertaining a stranger.

In a measure, courtesy had also compelled him to concur in the early morning leave-taking. If Doctor Carrington breakfasted alone, then he, Spinks, would have no opportunity of again seeing his good Samaritan. He would prefer remaining a day or so and seeing more of her; but this was out of the question. He could not invite himself; and, after all, these people were strangers.

Smoking materials and current magazines were on a corner table; and Spinks, lighting a pipe, tried to read himself into a state of drowsiness. But he could not concentrate; his mind was too active, and he found himself reading the same line over and over without being any the wiser as to its message.

Finally he threw aside the magazine, switched off the light, and sat smoking by the open window. The moon was now in mid-heaven, flooding the grounds with its pale radiance, and Spinks experienced an intense longing to get outdoors.

This straightway increased as, suddenly, a figure came within range of his vision. It was that of the good Samaritan, who, accompanied by Beppo, was strolling toward a distant summerhouse. She walked slowly, her head bowed as if in thought. Once she turned and stood for a long moment staring at the house; and to Spinks it seemed as if she must be looking directly at him. This, of course, was impossible, as at that distance she could not possibly see him even had she known he was at the window; even had she known he was at the location of his room.

This he realized, but was now certain

he must get outdoors, and, laying aside the pipe, he walked downstairs. He made no effort at silence, though, thinking Doctor Carrington might have retired, he did not unnecessarily advertise his presence. The carpet, however, was very thick and soft, and the result was that Spinks innocently achieved the same result as if he were making the greatest efforts at secrecy.

He found the hall door open, and, turning to the right on descending the steps, made straight for the little summerhouse. "I saw you from the window," he said simply, in greeting. "I'm going early in the morning with your father, and I understood I wouldn't see you again. I wanted to say good-by in person, Miss Carrington, and to thank you—"

"But I'm not Doctor Carrington's daughter," she interrupted, smiling a little. "My name is Alwyn, and I'm Doctor Carrington's ward."

"Oh, well, it doesn't make very much difference so long as you're you," said Spinks cheerfully, leaning against the entrance post and looking down at her as she absently stroked Beppo's head. "But I naturally inferred you were his daughter."

"Yes, naturally," she agreed. "You say you are leaving early to-morrow?"

"Yes, on the eight-o'clock train. I'm going back to Frisco."

"So far as that?" she asked. "And you must go so soon? Business, I suppose."

"No, I haven't any very pressing business engagement," he said soberly. "But—well, I haven't been asked to remain any longer, you see."

"I see," she said calmly.

"And, of course, I can't invite myself."

"No, of course you can't," she agreed.

"And there's really no reason why I should be invited to remain," he pursued. "Doctor Carrington was very kind in asking me to remain for the night."

She nodded. "Tell me, are you related to the Mr. Spinks who formerly lived here?"

"Yes. I'm his nephew. That's why Doctor Carrington invited me to stay. I thought, perhaps, he had told you. Did you know my uncle?"

She shook her head. "I haven't been here very long."

"Miss Dor'thy!" called a voice from the house. "Miss Dor'thy, is yo'-all out dar?" And presently the squat figure of the negro woman who had conducted Spinks to his room was seen waddling quickly across the lawn. "Yo' guard-deen done wants yo', Miss Dor'thy, and I 'clares to goodness, honey——"

"Yes, Lily, I'm here," called the girl, checking whatever Lily was about to add. "I'll be there a moment."

She turned to Spinks with a nervous little laugh, and held out her hand. "I'm going in the back way. Good night and good-by."

Before he could utter a word she had gone, Beppo at her heels. He watched as she raced across the lawn in the wake of the waddling Lily, and vanished through the rear entrance.

Spinks returned to the house feeling downcast and subdued. Miss Alwyn had been so different; so constrained, absent-minded, and indifferent. Had she resented his hunting her out? Surely not. He felt she was not the conventional, mock-modest kind that would misunderstand his motive. And then her leave-taking had been so abrupt; so unlike her. And for a moment she had looked actually frightened when Lily appeared with her message.

As Spinks entered the house, he met young Carrington in the lower hall. "Hello, I thought you were in bed!" exclaimed the latter, staring hard and suspiciously. "What were you doing?"

"Walking," said Spinks briefly, resenting the other's peremptory tone. "Why, is it any harm?"

"Miss Alwyn was out there, too," accused Carrington, glowering.

"So I believe," indifferently.

"Had a date, eh? Say, you're going some, aren't you? Haven't even been introduced to her."

"That's hardly the way to talk to a guest, Mr. Carrington."

"You're not *my* guest," said Carrington rudely. "I don't fall for your claims; not on your life. I'm not like my father."

"It's unnecessary to add that," said Spinks. "I'm sorry you think me an impostor. However, it can't be helped. I suppose I should take offense; but, then, I'm Doctor Carrington's guest, not yours."

"Oh, I don't look for any decency or common pride in your kind," said Carrington. "You know you're not wanted; but I guess you'll swallow anything for the sake of a hand-out. Well, it's only for to-night, thank the Lord! We'll feed you to-night, but if you're around the premises to-morrow, you'll get yours, all right. I'll not stand for any panhandler pulling my father's leg, and you can bank on that!"

"It's no use, Mr. Carrington," smiled Spinks. "You can't insult me into leaving. If you had outlined your feelings more delicately, I'd have gone, perhaps; but I refuse to be bullied. I won't say anything more, for, if you can forget that your father is my host, I can't forget I'm his guest."

"Is that so?" sneered Carrington. "Well, it seems you can forget it enough to fake about going to bed, sneak down-stairs, beat it out to the garden, and make love to your host's ward, you gay young Romeo! Oh, yes, I saw you. I suppose you think she's got some money, and you can get in soft. Because she was fool enough to give you a lift this morning, you think she's fallen for your looks, eh? I told her she was a fool, and that you'd take advantage of it. Well, if you knew what she thinks of you, I guess you wouldn't hang around here, even if you've got a hide like an elephant."

"After this pleasant discourse we will now retire," said Spinks. "Sleep off your grouch, my dear boy, if you can. It's foolish to get 'all het up' over what can't be helped. *Adios*, Mr. Chesterfield."

Carrington swore audibly, and scowled as Spinks waved an amiable farewell and ascended the stairs. "For two cents I'd kick the pants up over

your head, you dirty little panhandler!" he called.

"Make it ten and I'll go you," promptly replied Spinks, pausing. "Ten, twenty, thirty is the box-office rate, and I never perform for less. Couldn't do it even for you, Mr. Chesterfield. It would be against the dignity of my profession."

"Ha-ha! Mirthful laughter!" Carrington sneered. "You're as funny as a crutch. Just let me catch you round here this time to-morrow. I'll show you!"

Spinks gained his room without further incident, and, relighting the pipe, sat for a long time smoking and thinking. Carrington had angered him greatly, though he had professed indifference, and he would have taken pleasure in giving it physical vent. In a measure, he had learned self-control, the childishness and futility of resorting to violence, though his native quickness of temper did not always yield to the dictates of reason. Again, he could hardly engage in physical combat with his host's son, and in the former's house. That would be placing himself on Carrington's level; playing into his hands. Yet the other had said to him things that no red-blooded man could condone or forget.

He wondered what had occasioned Carrington's marked hostility. Did he sincerely think him, Spinks, to be an impostor, or did he love Miss Alwyn, and therefore resent the meeting in the garden and her kindness toward him which she had displayed from the first? Or was it merely the outcropping of a naturally ugly, assertive disposition? Perhaps the true explanation lay in a combination of all three. What a glaring difference there was between father and son! He had taken a great liking to gracious and kindly Doctor Carrington.

Then his thoughts turned to Dorothy Alwyn, and he sat for the better part of an hour smoking and dreaming.

He was aroused by a knock at the door; and, before he could arise, he saw a small piece of paper being pushed over the threshold. He scrambled out of his armchair, picked up the scrap of paper, and opened the door.

Lily, the squat negro servant, black as the ace of spades, was walking down the corridor; and she did not turn at the opening of the door. There was no one else in sight.

Spinks closed his door, and slowly unfolded the paper that had been deftly fashioned in the form of a cocked hat. He read the following:

Do not go to-morrow; make some excuse to remain. Say you are sick—anything. I must see you alone, and will arrange time and place. Say nothing to any one and make no attempt to communicate with me. But you may trust Lily, the bearer of this.

Trust me implicitly, for this concerns your cousin, Burton Spinks.

Burn this.

DOROTHY ALWYN.

CHAPTER VII.

Doctor Carrington entered the room looking very solicitous; even worried. Awakened by Lily at half past six, Spinks had made no effort to arise, and a further summons and the information that Doctor Carrington was delaying breakfast for him was treated with similar indifference. Finally Lily had brought a third and last message. Would Spinks kindly hurry; or they would miss the train? Spinks sent back word that he was very sorry, but his ankle had become so painful he couldn't put foot to the floor.

After careful thought, he had decided this was the most plausible excuse. Young Carrington knew of the accident, and a simulation of any illness would be instantly detected by Doctor Carrington. Though he might doubt concerning the ankle, insistence should win the day.

He found his guest sitting on the bed half clothed, as if he had made heroic efforts to dress. "I'm awfully sorry," said Spinks, eying his ankle, "that this should happen. I thought I'd be able to navigate somehow, but it's impossible. The blamed thing's gone back on me."

In silence, Carrington attentively examined the ankle, Spinks wincing as if in pain, and making objurgations about "going easy there."

"Yes, it has been wrenched badly, but

the swelling has gone down," said Carrington, looking hard at his bogus patient. "And weren't you able to walk all right last night?"

"Sure," nodded Spinks. "That's why I can't understand it," looking his perplexity. "Of course, it hurt last night, but nothing like this."

"Very strange," said the other, shaking his head. "Come, bear your weight on it. Make an effort. Let me see."

Spinks obediently arose, only to fall back on the bed with a harrowing groan. "No use!" he gasped. "I might as well try to walk on a bleeding stump. I must have broken a bone." As a piece of acting it would have gained instant applause for the Hellespont Trio.

"Of course, I'm not a surgeon," said Carrington doubtfully, "but I'm hanged if I can see or feel anything the matter with it. I'll give you a powerful emulsion; and, if that doesn't fix it by this evening, it will show there must be a small bone broken, and you can do nothing better than go to the Glendale Hospital."

"I'm sorry I've caused all this trouble and made you miss your train," said Spinks, secure in the knowledge he could remain in the house until at least that evening.

"Oh, not at all," replied Doctor Carrington. But his customary graciousness seemed forced. "Accidents will happen, and it's a poor host that can't make the best of them. As for my going to New York, I can put that off until to-morrow."

"I hope you're not doing so on my account," protested Spinks. "Really, there's no occasion."

"I'm not," said Carrington, striving hard to conceal an evident irritation. "I've no pressing engagement."

"Nor have I," said Spinks ingenuously. "In that case neither of us is greatly inconvenienced. I'm glad."

From Carrington's expression it was evident he did not share this optimistic and cheerful view, and he left the room with a perfunctory expression of sympathy and the hope that Spinks wouldn't have to go to the hospital. His spon-

taneous cordiality and graciousness had, somehow, evaporated overnight.

Spinks finished dressing, and, after applying the embrocation supplied by his host—for, though far from being in dire need of it, an application would certainly benefit the ankle that was still somewhat weak—he propped himself in a chair and awaited further developments.

Presently Lily entered with his breakfast, and his heart beat more quickly when, on unfolding his napkin, another one of the little paper-cocked hats dropped out on the tray. Opening it, he read:

Thank you for your obedience and faith. Everything has worked well so far, though I think Doctor C. suspects something. He knows you met me last night in the garden. Will let you know when and where I can see you alone. Say nothing about your cousin.

Burn this.

D.-A.

Spinks had hardly finished reading this when, without knocking or giving any warning of his intention, young Carrington opened the door and marched in. Spinks hastily shoved the note into his pocket.

"So we're laid up, eh?" began the other in his sneering, bullying way. "That's the game we're playing now. If we can't fake one way, we'll try another, eh?"

"I don't understand you," said Spinks amiably.

"No, of course you don't. You haven't any idea of taking advantage of my father's senseless generosity. You wouldn't think of playing it low-down on him. You're not that kind. Any one can see at a glance you aren't a common panhandler."

"I suppose you're trying to be sarcastic over something," said Spinks mildly, shaking his head; "but for the life of me I don't get you. I don't see why you should pick on me all the time. Don't bully me, Mr. Carrington. I'm a poor little fellow with a bum ankle."

The other projected his pendulous lip as he glowered at Spinks, dimly suspecting he was being trifled with. "Look here! You're faking about that ankle, and you know it," he blustered. "You

can't fool me, for I'm no sucker; one's enough in the family. You're trying to remain here on any excuse, and you don't care how you lie. That's about the size of it; but if you think you can get past me with this faked-up story, you're mighty mistaken!"

"How suspicious you are!" deplored Spinks. "Your father's a doctor. Don't you think he'd know if I was faking?"

"Well, don't think you've fooled him," said Carrington darkly. "If you know what's good for you, you'll get out before you're thrown out!"

"Thanks for the hint," said Spinks; "but I can't take it."

Before the other could reply, Doctor Carrington was heard belowstairs peremptorily calling, "Harry! Harry!" and Spinks' visitor, with another of his agreeable looks and exclamations, reluctantly left the room. "Mind what I told you last night," he warned, turning at the door. "If that precious ankle of yours isn't better by six o'clock, you'll be kicked out! Don't think you can impose on my father any longer, for I'm going to have a say in this."

"You're a sweet and charming young host; one that any guest would be proud of," said Spinks. "Just full of the milk of human kindness."

Carrington stepped back into the room; but another peremptory summons from his father caused him to slam the door and stump off down the hall, leaving a trail of blasphemy.

"Sweet youth!" breathed Spinks, gripping the arms of his chair. "I can see now how murder is done."

At noon he received a third and last communication from Dorothy Alwyn. It was almost a letter in length.

Doctor C. has gone out in the motor—where, I don't know—leaving his son on guard. They don't want you to have an opportunity of meeting me again; of that I feel sure. We must make the best of the present, for I don't know what may happen.

I have said I am going to walk into town—Glendale—and will leave in half an hour. There is a summerhouse—not the one I was in last night—but in the northern end of the grounds; at the back of the house, I mean. It is by the servants' entrance, a gate in the wall opening on the back road.

After leaving presumably for town I will

reach this gate by a circuitous route and there wait for you. Understand, I will be behind the wall so I can't be seen by Harry C., who, I know, will keep his eye on you.

Say your ankle feels better, and that you want to try it out. Come to the summerhouse, and don't forget the limp, for I'm sure Harry C. will be watching you. The summerhouse is close by the gate, and though we won't see each other, we can talk without difficulty. You mustn't act as if you were talking to any one. Do not mention my name unless conditions are entirely satisfactory.

Burn this like the others. D. A.

Spinks impatiently waited for the half hour to pass; then opened his door and limped painfully downstairs.

Harry Carrington promptly stepped out from the library, on the second floor, that owned a northern exposure. "Well, well, if the patient hasn't recovered!" he exclaimed, with a satirical smile. "We have decided that we feel all right, eh?"

"Well, it feels a bit better," replied Spinks, determined on keeping his temper at all hazards. "That embrocation your father gave me is certainly great stuff."

"Is that so? I suppose what I said had no hand in this miraculous cure? Then we're off, eh?"

"I hope so, Mr. Carrington; but I can't promise until I try it out. I think a little exercise may do it good. If I can walk with any degree of comfort, you may be sure I won't force my company on you for another night."

"That's the surest thing you know, Mr. Panhandler!" said Carrington rudely. "You're entirely right about that. If you take my advice, you'll discover that you can beat it, comfort or no comfort."

Spinks, offering no reply, slowly limped downstairs, commendably acting the part of a cripple.

The summerhouse was quite a distance, for the grounds were large; and Spinks, bearing in mind Miss Alwyn's warning, and the fact that the library, which Harry Carrington had reentered, had a northern exposure, maintained his crippled gait; making slow and halting progress.

He entered the summerhouse or rustic

arbor, and sat down. "Miss Alwyn," he said, in a low voice.

"I am here," came the prompt reply from behind the wall, and, turning, he could see the tip of her hat through the barred gate. "Face the house," she added, "and look as if you were resting. They can't hear us from the house, but speak low. I can hear you perfectly."

He obeyed, leaning back and facing the distant library. "And now what is all this about?" he asked. "Why these secret-society maneuvers? Why can't I speak to you like a regular person? I never turned my back on a lady before."

"You needn't be flippant, Mr. Spinks," she said rather sharply. "I'm not acting this way to amuse myself. Don't think I'm a romantic fool, or that I take any undue personal interest in you. I thought you wouldn't misunderstand. You didn't seem that kind."

"And I'm not," said Spinks. "Forgive me. But it's kind of hard to believe such actions necessary in this year and country."

"Yes, I suppose so, but human nature is the same, and it never changes," she replied. "Mr. Spinks, I believe your Cousin Burton is being illegally detained in an insane asylum, and that you are the logical person to free him. Doctor Carrington knows I suspect this, and that's why he doesn't want me to see you. Your uncle left his estate to Burton and you; to be equally divided between you two. Doctor Carrington has no more right here than I have."

CHAPTER VIII.

Spinks was silent for a moment with astonishment. He to share equally in the estate with Burton Spinks!

Miss Alwyn continued: "Your Cousin Burton was wild and dissipated, and Doctor Carrington knew your uncle for years; avarice got the best of him. He knew nothing of your branch of the family out on the coast, and believed the name would become extinct when Burton died. Your uncle, a year or so before his death, became eccentric, and Carrington induced him to come out

here. Mr. Spinks gave up whatever friends he had; but I can't say if any undue influence was used. Carrington also came here to live, and brought his son along. The latter, for all his uncouthness and seeming lack of education, is a very cunning young lawyer.

"Your Cousin Burton had quarreled with his father, and it was Carrington's game to further separate them. He had great influence over your uncle, being his physician and intimate friend for years. He hoped that Mr. Spinks would disinherit his son, and, there being no next of kin—as he believed—the estate would be left to him in token of his long friendship and services."

"He told me the estate was far smaller than people imagined," said Spinks as she paused; "that it was left to Burton, but that he, Carrington, got the house."

"There is no truth in that," replied Miss Alwyn. "Doctor Carrington was left nothing but a few personal effects—trinkets, mementos, and so forth. And I am sure the estate is very large."

"Mr. Spinks, after the quarrel with Burton, destroyed the original will in which his son was named as sole legatee. Carrington had his son draw up another—so as to be prepared—in which the doctor became the sole legatee. But contrary to their expectations, Mr. Spinks never signed it, for before his death he underwent a change of sentiment. In some manner he had learned of your father's death, and evidently he was sorry they had drifted apart. His thoughts also became more kindly toward his own son, though, from all accounts, Burton was entirely to blame for the estrangement. He left the estate to you and his son."

"Did he make a will to that effect?"

"Not so far as I know. I believe he merely spoke of the matter to Doctor Carrington, naming him executor; and this was the first time the latter knew of your branch of the family. I think Mr. Spinks asked young Carrington to draw up this new will; but either it was purposely deferred by them, or Spinks died before his wishes could be carried out."

"And then what happened?"

"Doctor Carrington produced the will

in his favor that Mr. Spinks had never even seen. But now it was signed with his name and duly witnessed."

"You mean forgery?"

"Exactly," said Miss Alwyn, in a quiet voice. "Your Cousin Burton came on, and there was a fine row in the house after the funeral, so I understand. He openly charged Doctor Carrington with unduly influencing your uncle, and he threatened to contest and break the will. He mentioned nothing about forgery, and evidently he never suspected the genuineness of that signature. He merely believed Doctor Carrington had feathered his nest, using undue influence, at Burton's expense."

"Carrington charged Burton with being a prodigal, a roué, degenerate, and any number of other ugly things, claiming he had broken Mr. Spinks' heart and hastened his death. He also said Burton was of unsound mind; and there was some truth in this, as people knew. Burton, in a fit of rage, threatened Carrington's life, and one day attacked him. After that he disappeared. Village gossip says he is in a sanitarium some place."

"And do you think he could be placed in a madhouse against his wishes, without being legally declared insane?"

Miss Alwyn laughed shortly. "Don't you read of similar cases every day? Look at the facts of the case: In the first place, Doctor Carrington has enormous influence in this county and State. He was born and brought up here, and has held many political appointments. In fact, it was through him that Mr. Spinks was induced to buy this place as a country seat."

"Carrington stopped active practice some years ago; but his acquaintance and influence are, I repeat, enormous; and with the Spinks' fortune his power has doubled or trebled. He has many likable qualities, as you may have noted; people swear by him, and have no idea of the real man; for, on occasion, he can be more cruel than his son, though in a different way."

"You won't find a person in Glendale who believes Burton Spinks was thieved out of his inheritance. Burton's an *arist*-

sider, and, from what they say of him, was never liked. Doctor Carrington's a 'native son,' spends his money here, has done many things for the public good, and presents only the best side of his character. I don't say he's a born scoundrel, but avarice has brought out and developed the worst in him. He could not give up the Spinks' fortune, and, when he saw all hopes were groundless, he resorted to other measures.

"Again," pursued Miss Alwyn, "look at your Cousin Burton. He was a known profligate, and his vices *may* have made him mentally unsound. He threatened Doctor Carrington's life and openly attacked him. There was no relative or friend to take his part, and he had no money to hire a lawyer. Do you think it impossible he could be railroaded to an asylum?"

"No, not now," said Spinks slowly. "Have you any idea where he's confined?"

"Not definitely, but I've suspicions that come by inference. There's a private asylum between here and West Farmington—you must have passed it, though you wouldn't suspect its character—"

"I guessed it," interrupted Spinks, "for I had an experience with some of the inmates I won't forget in a hurry." He related the encounter with Sir Isaac, Doctor Scale, and Mr. Mulligan.

"Doctor Carrington is interested in that asylum," replied Miss Alwyn. "In fact, I believe him to be back of it in a financial way. It would be the logical place in which to confine Burton Spinks."

"If what I saw is a typical way of treating patients," said Spinks, "the people who run that place should be in jail, and I intended speaking to the proper authorities. Of all the brutes of an orderly or attendant I ever saw, Mulligan is the worst; and Doctor Scale struck me as a cold-blooded specimen, to say the least."

"Then," said the girl, "you can guess what chance a wrongfully detained patient must have in there. Your cousin may rot, and no one care or know of

it, for that matter. He has no relatives to make inquiries—no one but you. And evidently he wasn't the kind to have enduring friends—friends who would really care what became of him; who would become anxious if they didn't hear from him. The place is strictly guarded, and you will find, I think, an investigation to be no very easy matter. With Doctor Carrington's influence, he could whitewash any charge."

"And what is your position in all this?" asked Spinks curiously, wishing he could see her face and note its expression. "Were you here when any of this happened?"

"No, I never met your cousin or Mr. Spinks, as I told you last night. I have only been here a few months. My parents died when I was young—I have no recollection of their death—and I became Doctor Carrington's ward. I spent all my life in boarding schools or seminaries, and knew nothing of this when I came here, my guardian telling me what he told you—that he had been left the house."

"I needn't go into details," continued Miss Alwyn, "as to how I first began to have suspicions, but these weren't confirmed until last night. I didn't know you were a relative, but thought it might be possible. When I mentioned your name, adding that you wished to see him, Doctor Carrington looked queerly at his son, and I knew the same thought had occurred to them. I was told to go to my room, and I knew better than to disobey. But I overheard my guardian say to his son when he thought I was beyond earshot: 'This fellow may be the nephew from San Francisco. I wonder what brought him here, for it's impossible he knows anything. If he is the nephew, treat him decently, Harry, for otherwise you may arouse suspicions he never had.'"

"I see," said Spinks. "But Harry evidently had a plan of his own. He thought he could insult me out of the place."

"What I had overheard aroused all my old suspicions," continued the girl; "but still I didn't know anything posi-

tively. They didn't tell me you had proved to be Mr. Spinks' nephew, and I wanted to know. So I found a chance of going into the garden, hoping you would see me and act as you did." Here she paused for a moment.

"Harry had seen us, and so I had to leave," she continued; "but even had we not been interrupted, I don't know if I would have said anything to you. What could I say? I had only suspicions, and Doctor Carrington is my guardian. You might have ridiculed my warning or misunderstood my motive. Or, even if believing me, you might have acted hastily and foolishly. On my return to the house, I was summoned to the library, and there properly scolded and threatened by Doctor Carrington, who called me a flirt and other things. You he called a poor vagrant, whom, out of charity, he was giving shelter for the night.

"I then knew that you were Henry Spinks' nephew, and that if you left in the morning, according to Doctor Carrington's plan, without having any idea of the true state of affairs, justice would never be done. Carrington and his son were still talking in the library, and, sneaking downstairs, I went through the billiard room and listened at the connecting door—the rooms open into each other, you know. The sliding doors were not quite shut, and I could hear plainly. Harry was saying:

"'He knows nothing, and I would kick him out of the house.'

"'There's no need to do that,' said Doctor Carrington. 'Why make a needless enemy? To-morrow morning he'll be on his way to the coast with nothing but the kindest feelings for us. Burton might as well be a stranger for all this fellow knows about him, or cares. Once back home, he won't bother us again.'

"'Well, I don't like the idea of him staying here, even for a night,' growled Harry. 'You can't tell what might happen. I'll bet Dorothy suspects a thing or two from the way she's been acting lately, and a word to this fellow will be enough.'

"'She won't see him again before he

goes. I'll take precious good care of that,' said Doctor Carrington. 'I tell you I've acted for the best. As an old friend of Henry Spinks, one who is living in this house, how can I refuse hospitality to his only nephew without arousing suspicion? What excuse could I make for not wanting him here? To act otherwise would be to court trouble. He mustn't know we want to get rid of him.'

"From that," continued Miss Alwyn, "they reviewed the whole matter, and I learned everything I've told you; all my suspicions were confirmed. I got back to my room without their seeing me, wrote you that note, and got Lily to push it under your door. She would do anything for me."

"It's been awfully good of you to tell me all this," said Spinks, not knowing quite what to say. "Tell me, has Doctor Carrington ever ill-treated you in any way? Please don't misunderstand me, for I'm not thinking you've warned me out of spite or revenge."

"No, that doesn't enter into it," she replied, "though it may look so, for I've never liked Doctor Carrington, and I fairly detest his son."

"I wonder what's the best thing to do?" he said musingly.

"Whatever you decide to do, don't let them suspect what you know until you're safely away from here," said the girl earnestly. "I can't impress that on you too strongly. Don't be deceived by the knowledge that this is the twentieth century, and that you're living in a law-abiding country. That's all very well on the face of it; but things can happen just the same, and Doctor Carrington may do anything to keep from being exposed and forfeiting the Spinks' fortune. Don't say a word, but fight them through a lawyer once you're away from here."

"The first thing to do is get my cousin out of that madhouse," said Spinks; "and that must be done at once. We may expect a long and bitter fight in the courts over the will, for we may not be able to prove the signature a forgery. Your testimony is uncorroborated—"

"Not wholly," said Miss Alwyn.

"I've found out that Lily has overheard some things. The forgery has been successful because no one thought to doubt it; but once attacked, an expert may have no difficulty in proving—"

"Here comes Beppo—and Harry Carrington!" interrupted Spinks. "They're coming this way."

"Then I'm off!" said the girl. "Don't let him know I've been here, and don't be foolhardy; wait till you can start the fight on even terms. Remember what happened to your cousin."

Carrington was leisurely approaching; but Beppo, on catching sight of Spinks, had started on a dead run. As he reached the summerhouse his actions suddenly changed. After sniffing the air a moment, he yelped and dashed madly at the gate, turning to Spinks and eloquently pleading to get out.

"Hello!" said Carrington, coming up and eying these maneuvers. "What's up? Usually you aren't so all-fired anxious to get out. Who do you smell, Beppo?" He looked hard at Spinks, sudden suspicion in his eyes. "Has any one been out there?"

Spinks coolly stared back. "It looks like a public highway, doesn't it? I suppose people do use it."

"Is that so," said Carrington, employing his favorite expression. He opened the gate and stepped out.

Beppo was off like a shot. Far up the road there was the flash of white serge as Miss Alwyn turned into a side road.

Carrington purpled slowly, swelling up as if poisoned; then as slowly paled. He quietly reentered the grounds, shut the gate, and stood, hands in pockets, eying the seemingly unconscious Spinks. "Well, how's the ankle?" he asked at length, and with such an evident show of cordiality that the other looked up in surprise.

"It's better," said Spinks, recovering from his astonishment. "I'll be able to leave, after all."

"Look here, Mr. Spinks," said Carrington shamefacedly, lighting a cigarette and taking a seat by the other's side, "I've been a bit oversuspicious and

rude, I'm afraid. My father's so easy-going and charitable, unscrupulous people rather put it on him, and I've had to act the part of watchdog. But I've had time to think matters over, Mr. Spinks, and I'm sorry I acted hastily in your case. I now see your accident is genuine—"

"Oh, that's all right," dismissed Spinks. "I suppose I shouldn't blame you for doing what you considered your duty."

"Well, I can't let you leave like this," said Carrington. "You must give me a chance to redeem myself."

"That's quite unnecessary, Mr. Carrington."

"But I insist. You must stay," protested the other. "If my father comes home and finds you gone, I'll be in bad for one thing. Anyway, your ankle isn't fit to walk on, and there's no excuse for your going. There's no reason why you can't stay all night and start West in the morning. I couldn't think of turning a guest away in this manner; and, if you insist, I'll feel like a brute. I believe you to be the nephew—"

"All this is quite useless," said Spinks. "I don't want to seem rude, but I have to go. I couldn't remain here under any circumstances now that I'm able to walk."

"You mean because of the way I've acted?" asked Carrington.

"Yes," said Spinks.

Carrington shrugged. "I see there's no use trying to persuade you. I'm sorry you can't overlook what I said." He led the way to the house without another word, Spinks following in silence. He had left his hat in the hall. Entirely engrossed with thoughts of Dorothy Alwyn and her strange story, he forgot to limp or display any evidence of a sprained ankle. His companion, however, apparently failed to note this oversight.

As Spinks reached for his hat, Carrington suddenly turned and struck him heavily in the face. Then he launched his bulk at Spinks and bore him to the floor.

All in the Business

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "Clipping the Wolf's Claws," "Power of the Press," Etc.

The mule-streak in a man is sometimes responsible for certain actions that appall him when he looks back on them. Here is what Johnny Reeves' mule streak did for him when he set out to get a wicked-looking, huge-fisted client for his live-stock commission firm.

WE heard some men talk a heap, and tell what they think they'd do, when up against danger. But I want to say right here that no man knows just what he'll do until the bell rings. Take, for instance, the time I saw a party tearin' out of a saloon, with another gazabel directly in front of him, and both a-shootin'. I'm just across the street, and can hear the little bullets sayin': "I want you-e-e-e!" Now, I always had thought that under such conditions I'd get right up and throw gravel and break all the speed records. But I didn't run; thought I would, but I didn't. Instead, I lifted the front out of a clothin' store and got inside. Believe me, I got inside. No—a man never knows what he'll do until he does it.

There was the time I met "Beef" Matoon—

But I'll have to go back on the trail a bit. I was talkin' over things with Billy Dayton just before leavin' for my second trip West that season. We always talked things over before I started out. Billy never acted like no boss. He'd just ask me what I thought about anything, and generally he relied on my judgment. That was why I worked for the Dayton Live Stock Commission Company so long and against offers of better salary from other outfits. I liked Billy Dayton. Of course, he'd kid me at times. But he never threw out his chest and got important. And, take it

from me, that's the kind of a man you'll work for and die for.

Well, we're settin' there and talkin' over the outlook, and touchin' on this shipper and that shipper and sort of plannin' the campaign, when all of a sudden Billy says to me:

"How about Beef Matoon? How does it come you never went after him? So far as I know, his stuff's all gone to Omaha. Why don't you take a crack at him, Johnny?" Billy lit a cigar and put his feet on the desk. "Seems to me that Beef Matoon is worth goin' after," he said, lookin' at his cigar, as if its brand was more important than all of the Matoon cattle. But I knew Billy. He was just feelin' me out, and I was there with an answer.

"Billy," says I, "Beef Matoon shipped to Chicago once. He had a lot of light, soft stuff, and it went to pieces. Besides, the road was short of power, and it took him a month of Sundays to get down here. Then his cattle went onto a market jammed with poor stuff, and old Beef lost money. That settled it for that old rannikin. Say 'Chicago' to him now, and he'd fight a mess of wild cats."

Billy kept on lookin' at his cigar, and then he says, like he was talkin' to the ceilin', or 'most anything beside me: "I thought you were a go-getter. Of course, if Beef Matoon is too hard a nut for you to crack, I suppose I'll have

to shut up the shop and go out and land him myself."

I knew he was kiddin' me, but it hurt just the same.

"You needn't mind," I says, easy like, 'cause I didn't want to seem too strong. "I'll bring him in."

Then Billy changed the subject. "How's Mrs. Reeves these days?" he asked.

"Finer than silk," I replied. "Only she don't like the idea of livin' alone in a Chicago flat, with me on the road."

"Well," says Billy, in a kind voice, and showin' that he had other plans for me, "we're goin' to get things squared around here different some day. And when we do, I sort of figger that you won't have to stay on the road."

Then he reached over and hit me a clip on the shoulder, and I shook his hand, and left him with a sudden "Good-by," to keep from showin' how much I liked the little, thoughtful cuss.

"Don't overlook Matoon!" he called after me.

"I won't!" I yelled back.

With a man on the road, it is mostly "Good-by." And you can bet that Leona and I had had our share of breakin' aways, even though we'd only been married a couple of years.

Women are queer. They have a way of seein' trouble before it comes; and there's hardly any one of them but what is strong for that presentiment deal. That trip, Leona walked down to the L station with me, and there was tears in her eyes as she says "Good-by." I cheered her up the best I could, but she seemed to have a blue spell she couldn't shake off.

"Johnny," she says, mournful like, "why won't you quit the road? You know papa has offered to help you, and will do anything for you."

I didn't say anything, for we'd thrashed all that out before. Dad-in-law Summers had plenty of dough, and was willin' to kick in a wad of it for me. But that wouldn't be me makin' it. It would be somebody handin' me something just because they was my wife's blood relation. Not for me. As long as Johnny Reeves can stand up, he will

hoe his own row; and what he earns will be his; and what he does, he will do himself. And hustlin' shipments for Billy Dayton was the only way I knew to drag down enough coin to keep a wife. So I kissed Leona, jollied her a lot, and hit the trail, yellin' back that I'd send her a post card at every station.

I had a half dozen shippers in Beef Matoon's town to see, and I figgered to throw my rope on that old he-bear at the same time.

I grabs a shave and a bath when I lands, and gets down to business the second day. But I didn't bunt right into Beef without a little sizin' up of the situation. Never bust into a shipper until you have a complete line on his disposition.

So I hung around for a day or two, sizin' things up. I sees old Beef as he stumps in and out of the hotel now and then, for the town was headquarters for a lot of them old-time cowmen, and I want to say that he was one bad-looker. He had the wickedest face, I believe, I ever saw in the front of a man's head.

He was clean-shaven, and the trails of sin on his map looked as deep and as well-worn as cow paths around a water hole. He had one of them trembly mouths, wide and thin-lipped, that tells of the man who's lookin' for trouble and loves it. His hair was iron-gray, stiff as wheat stubble, and clipped short. Small eyes under bushy eyebrows; and a heavy, flat nose. The back of his neck was checkered like gumbo cracked with the heat. He weighed two hundred, and all of it was hard meat, and as tough as rawhide.

I remembered the story about him. His foreman had asked his advice about a certain sheepman cuttin' in on his range.

"Don't talk to me about them woolies!" bellers Matoon. "Beef 'em, beef 'em, I say!"

And that was how he got his name. Anybody or anything that got in his way was due to get beefed; and you must know that beefin' a man is knockin' him out proper.

I found the whole town was afraid of Beef Matoon. He was as rich as

mud, had a hand in everything in the burg that was makin' any money, controlled all the banks, and was the main ramrod, to say the least. He was a great, big stiff, who had had his own way so long that he thought he was a tin god. They said he wasn't afraid of anything. But as for the truth of that talk, I don't know. 'Most every man is afraid of something. And maybe Beef Matoon was cunnin' enough to cover up his pet fear. But I didn't have any time to monkey around and find out what he was afraid of. My job was to get to him and talk business and get his cattle.

Naturally, I was some prejudiced against Matoon; and I knew that it would be pretty hard to talk business with him because of that. A man whom you are prejudiced against can see it in your eyes; and as soon as he sees it, he'll tighten up. But I kept on a-skirmishin' around, sizin' up Matoon, tryin' to find some way to get at him right.

The entertainin' proposition I side-tracked, for he wouldn't let any one buy him anything. The soft talk was N. G. also, for that would make him think I was afraid of him; and, besides, there was nothin' flatterin' about himself he wouldn't say before I had a chance to. Beef Matoon had a mighty good opinion of himself; and, as I looked over the lay of the land, and the way people stepped aside for him, I couldn't see as I blamed him much.

Most of the pointers on Beef I got from the hotel clerk, who knew his habits well. The clerk was a nice, obligin' kid, and we'd always been good friends, so he wasn't backward about postin' me on Matoon.

"You're wastin' your time, Johnny," says the hotel clerk. "Matoon hates Chicago worse than poison. He never has got done tellin' how he once lost money on that market. One of the Chicago yards men tackled him a month ago, and Beef knocked him through a partition. My advice to you is to leave him alone. He's been drinkin' lately, and he's mighty ugly. Besides, he loves trouble. Beef Matoon would rather fight than eat. For the last two weeks,

he's been fairly crazy for a scrap, but he can't find no one to take him on. He slapped the head off of the president of the First National Bank, and kicked the cashier into the street. There's no use a-tryin' to do anything with him, for he's stronger than ten men and has got the money.

"I tell you, Johnny, he's got this town hoodooed; and, if you want to go back to your happy home, leave him alone—leave him alone! I want to say right here, that when he comes up front, I got business back of the safe. Besides, he's one of the owners of this hotel; and again let me say, leave him alone—leave him alone!"

I thanked the clerk, who was a right classy boy and mighty accommodatin', as well as a good friend of mine, and walked away.

Now, I'm a natural-born coward. I'm afraid, and that's all there is to it. I don't want trouble, and don't like the looks of it; that is, this knock-down-and-drag-out trouble. Of course, now and then I've had a little fuss, but I never was lookin' for it. Still, there's a mule streak in me. I started out to get Beef Matoon's cattle, had told Billy Dayton that I would; and, from what I could see, it was up to me to make good.

"But supposin'," says my natural-born cowardice, "you get hurt? Supposin' this here Beef Matoon says something mean to you and you lip him back? Supposin' that you say something mean to him again, and he to you, and then about that time his hairy hands go to reachin' for your throat? Supposin' that in the mix-up somebody is killed? Don't you remember how sorrowful Leona was when she said goodby?"

There's what bein' married does for a man. If he's a natural-born coward, gettin' married makes him that much worse. He's afraid he'll die without any insurance, and that his wife will be a poor, little, lone widow, and the world will stop runnin', and all that sort of thing. When he's single, he don't care if it does stop, and rather hopes it will, just for a change.

Then the mule streak gets to talkin',

and says: "Johnny Reeves, you're young and limber, and you weigh a hundred and eighty stripped. You've been in more rough-and-tumble fights than you have fingers and toes, and you know that your feet hain't so cold as you imagine they be. While your extremities get a little chilly at first, you know that, after you get into action, they get warmed up plenty enough. You're out for business, and you must take your chances with everything that comes along. It's all in the business, anyway, and don't you forget that. Kick in, Johnny Reeves—kick in! Don't let any of that sentimental mush about bein' a married man make you afraid of makin' good. Go to it!"

The mule streak won.

Ten minutes later, I stopped Beef Matoon on his way to the hotel bar, and I don't believe I ever saw an uglier mortal. It was as the hotel clerk had said; he had been drinkin'—not one of those sudden drunks, but a prolonged spree. He was one of those kind that could stand gallons of liquor; and a drunk to him was a matter of two or three months. Never off his feet, always knowin' what he was doin', but, just the same, drunk, ugly, and prayin' for trouble.

"So you're from *Chicago*?" he bawled, lookin' at me with his little, wicked eyes. "Glad to meet you!" He reached out a mitt like a gorilla's, and I knew I was called for.

I grabbed his hand and set my teeth. Beef's iron fingers shut down on mine, and I felt my knuckles grind and crack. But I stood it. It was something fierce, and made my heart jump up in my neck; but I only grinned, and said something about it bein' a nice day. At last he let go of my hand and looked at me, as if sizin' me up. My hand hung at my side, numb and bleedin'. The old hellion hadn't broken any of the fingers, but he had bruised and crushed the flesh.

"So you're after *my business*?" he said, changin' his tone and speakin' soft.

"Yes," I replies, "I believe in straight talk. We can get you a better average price at Chicago than you can get at the

river markets. Just because you had bad luck once is no sign you should lose yourself money all the time. Business is business, and I'm here to show you how and why we can get you more money for your stuff than it will bring at the river."

Old Beef never interrupted me, but I could see his lips beginnin' to tremble more than usual. The old wolf was actually crazy for trouble. Thinks I: "The hotel clerk was right. I am just wastin' my time." Then the mule streak says: "Johnny Reeves, stay with it! If this old gobblin' gives you any of his jaw music, go to him and get his goat. You're big enough and strong enough to do it."

"Is that all you got to say?" asked Beef, lickin' his lips and grinnin' like a hyena. He didn't give me time to answer before he said: "Come and have a drink with me."

I went.

Old Beef orders the drinks—whisky straight in tumblers, and no chasers.

I takes my drink left-handed, the right not bein' in good workin' order as yet.

Beef notices it, and says: "Why don't you drink like a man—with your right hand?"

"I'm left-handed," I says.

"Huh!" grunts old Beef, orderin' the tumblers to be filled up again.

Now, I can stand as much booze as the next man, but drinkin' raw whisky by the tumblerful will, in the course of time, get my goat and make me careless how I scatter my ideas. Feelin' a kind of a recklessness comin' on, I again brings up the subject of Beef's cattle goin' to Chicago.

Matoon lays a heavy hand on my shoulder. "Keep on a-talkin' that way," he says coaxin'ly, "not a hoof of mine ever goes to Chicago; but, just the same, I want to hear you talk. You're a real nice boy, and I want to hear you talk. Keep right on a-talkin'."

He began feelin' my shoulders and arms like as if to see whether I was worth while or not. Did you ever have a man size you up that way—like a feller poundin' over a horse he was about

to buy? Take it from me, there hain't nothin' about it to make you laugh. I was smilin', but the mule streak in me had kicked the stall down. If there is anything that makes me mad it is to have some one I don't like, anyhow, paw me over.

Just then, old Beef turns from me and calls up the house.

"Everybody take a drink on me!" he bellers, like a mad bull.

The bartender shoves out glasses for every one. Then Beef does what I'd been told was one of his regular exhibition stunts. He sweeps the glasses off the bar onto the floor, picks up a bottle and slams it into the back bar, and raises Cain in general. Nothin' is said or done, 'cause he's part owner of the hotel, and saloon, too; and you can't kick on a man destroyin' his own property if he wants to. When he starts in to smash up things, everybody steps back, and quite a few leave the room. They're all a-scared of him, and he knows it.

I don't say anything. I just stand there a-watchin' him dancin' around and yellin' like an Injun. Then, after he'd broke up a lot of stuff, he once more turns his attention to me.

"How do you like it?" he yells. "You——"

Now, there is one thing that even for the sake of business I will not stand for, and that is *a certain name*. When a man calls me that, even though I am a natural-born coward and my feet are froze clear to my knees, I'm goin' to go to him. A man can do most anything with me, but there's one word that's *my fightin' word*, and Beef had said it, and things were turnin' red.

So I says to Beef Matoon: "You old gray-headed cow thief, I'll tear your heart out for that!"

"Wow! Wow!" yells Beef, like he's tickled to death. "He's a-goin' to fight—whoopee—he's a-goin' to fight!" Then he jumps into me with all his yellow teeth showin'.

Says my natural-born cowardice to me: "Johnny Reeves, you're a gone goslin. Beat it while you have the strength to run." Then says the mule

streak: "Fight him any old way, but lick him, and lick him good! Kill him if you have to."

Old Beef gets me around the waist, bein' shorter than me, and over we goes. Believe me, he was a classy old rough-and-tumble scrapper, and as quick as a cat. But still, I was younger and quicker. As we crashed down, I whirled my body and landed crosswise on him. He turned over in a breath, and come up like a pitchin' horse, and I with him. Then we broke, and stood watchin' each other.

Nobody said a word or tried to interfere. They just stood around and looked at us. I remember that I felt what a blessin' it would be if somebody would just interfere. But nobody seemed to want the job; and about that time Beef rushes me again in a way that looked bad. I don't know how I knew it, but I felt he was figgerin' to kick me. That was his game—a foul kick, and then the boots on my face.

On he came, just as I thought. The next moment I grabbed his foot and upended him; but he was up again like a rubber ball, and there was foam on his lips and murder in his eyes. He come at me again, and I managed to land on his nose with my left, but that only made him madder.

He kept on a-comin'. I felt that I could not stand another clinch with him, so I backed away toward a billiard table; and, while I was backin', I noticed his right hand slip back in under his coat. I thought of only one thing—he was goin' for his gun. I had no time to clinch him, and there was only one thing to do, and that was to take a chance. My right hand was in bad shape; but I could use the fingers, and the wrist was O. K. I jumped back to the billiard table and grabbed a ball, and bounced that hunk of ivory square off of Beef Matoon's cheek bone.

He would have went down if he had been human. But not bein' human, the blow just dazed and blinded him, and about that time I broke loose. It seems that after I hit him with that ball, I got real mad and lit into him. I landed with my left on his chin, and then I drove

my weak right into his eye; but still he stayed up. Now, when a man gets real mad, it only makes him madder to have the man in front of him stay up. If the feller that he is tryin' to knock down will just quietly slump to the floor, the mad spell will leave the man standin' up.

But, try as I might, it seemed I wasn't mad enough to knock Beef Matoon down. And then of a sudden, I passed into the third stage, and become plum, ravin', crazy, blind mad, without no sense atall. Business, fear, Leona, everything—was gone. I was due to kill, to tear him into rags; and I was strong enough to whip six like him.

When it was all over, a couple of men were holdin' me up, and Beef Matoon was a-layin' on the floor the worst beat-up man I ever saw—even if I did do it.

They told me I went to him like a cyclone, and that long before they could drag me off of him, he had hollered, "Enough!" until you could hear him ten blocks away.

Actually, they said, old Beef bellered like a wolf with his paw in a trap.

Some of the boys got a chair for me, and I sat down. Then they got old Beef up into another chair and wiped his face with a bar towel. He was still groggy and dazed, but there wasn't any meanness left in his face. What fea-

tures he had left just looked surprised, that's all.

After a time, when they got things straightened around, the bartender, mindful of his job, shoves out a bottle and tumbler for old Beef, but he waves it away weak like. Then he turns his battered map to me.

"Boy," says he, humble and sober, "you've done me. And you're the first one. I'm gettin' old, and my strength's a-failin' me. Even my mind's a-failin' me, for I come near to usin' a gun on a man who was unarmed. No hard feelin's, I hope?"

"No," says I, "but now as you mention it, I don't know but what I'd feel better toward you if you'd ship to Billy Dayton."

Beef Matoon kind of jerks himself together, like as if he's tryin' to get his memory back. Then he sets and looks at the floor for a long time. Finally he says: "Every hoof, from now on, goes to Billy Dayton. I run this town, but you whipped me fair. I'm gettin' old."

I didn't pay any attention to his mournful talk, but just says, "Thank you," shook hands with him as much as I could, and teetered out to wash up; for, after all, it wasn't nothin' much—just a good scrap, and all in the business. But I never said nothin' to Leona about it.

In a fortnight you will get another story of the live-stock commission man. It is called "The Things That Count." In the first May POPULAR, on sale April 7th.



MANUFACTURING NEW LAWYERS

SINCE the interstate commerce commission became a real, live factor in the railroad world, it has developed what may be regarded as a new bar in the United States. As opposed to the old days when there was only one man famous for his knowledge and practice of railroad law before the commission, there are now one hundred and fifty men whose entire business is devoted to railroad work before the tribunal.

This branch of the government has also created the custom of towns and cities having traffic managers and special attorneys whose duty it is to see that the commission compels the railroads to give their cities square deals in the matter of rates and hauling facilities. Nearly every town in the West employs a man who keeps in constant touch with the commission for the purpose of helping and promoting the business and commerce of his community.

Men Command Men

By Donald Francis McGrew

Author of "Bugs' Brashares," "When the Tom-tom Calls," Etc.

The bare fact of shoulder straps may make an officer, but it doesn't make a man; and it takes a man to command men when the bullets are screaming and there is a horde of brown men thirsting for a chance to mete out sudden and terrible death with their bolos

THE old colonel sat on his palm-shaded porch, facing the sea, and smoked in satisfied complacence. Mindanao seemed quite a pleasant isle to him at that moment—for had not the inspector general given him a brusque compliment on the efficiency of this, his pet squadron? And, too, here was his daughter sitting near him, a healthy and apparently radiant girl, chatting gayly with the troop commander, and—a sigh—the young second lieutenant, just from the Point.

Somehow or other the old gentleman could not help looking at this young cub—he reminded him of what he himself had been at that age, by gad, yes! The square shoulders, the clean chin, but mostly the exuberant life that showed in his whole body. Too bad that Eunice—he cleared his throat. Oh, well, mother always looked after matters of that sort, and Eunice seemed happy as could be. And when things were settled he could square the accounts of that young brat of his—plague take him!—who persisted in getting into more trouble at college than the colonel's pocketbook could afford. It was a good thing that the boy was on the good side of his mother, or he would have been kicked out long ago to learn life on his own hook—by gad, yes! .

The colonel sighed again—then brightened, and turned to the troop commander.

"Ahem!" rubbing his goatee, "Mr. Griggs, that was a fine drill your troop

put up this morning. The inspector was pleased. Excellent, sir, excellent!"

First Lieutenant Griggs reddened with pleasure, and turned covertly to see if Miss Eunice had noticed. Strangely, she was looking out across the bay in pensive silence. He answered in oily tone, albeit a trifle pompously: "I have a fine troop, sir, a very fine troop. I have striven to make it so—though when I took them I must say they were in need of a shaking up."

The colonel's face clouded a little back of his cigar smoke. He remembered once when M troop had shot its way "through hell and high water, by gad!" to pull him out of a precarious hole in Luzon, and they had not needed a shaking up, either.

His wife broke in now: "I think the drill was perfectly splendid, don't you, Eunice?"

"Why, yes," she said brightly. "M troop has always been a splendid organization."

The slight cloud shifted from the colonel's face to her mother's.

"M troop has profited by a change of troop commanders," said the old lady tartly, beaming on Lieutenant Griggs as she spoke. "Your commands remind me so much of the colonel's when he was possessed of a stronger voice. They thrill one to listen to them!"

Truly here was a diplomat! The old gentleman grunted.

"Ve-ry good rendering, sir! Ve-ry good, indeed!"

The girl turned toward the second

lieutenant—in army slang a “shave-tail.” “I understand you are going on your first long hike this afternoon?” she said.

“Why, yes,” he answered. “I expect if the Moros see me coming, they’ll all run!” and he laughed genially. “However,” he added seriously, “I’m glad of the chance to get out. Perhaps some dato may take a fancy to our rifles, and give us a chance for a bully good scrap.”

“Perhaps you won’t be so anxious to go on after the scrap commences. War is no playground, young man.” This from his troop commander, although the difference in their ages was about seven years.

The colonel’s good lady shook her head sagely at the young second lieutenant.

“Of course, Mr. Randal,” she said encouragingly, “you will be helped greatly by being with such an able troop commander. It takes a *man* to command men, you know.” She flashed a triumphant glance at the disconcerted youth.

The girl’s face burned momentarily, and the colonel hurriedly spoke up.

“I am sure there is not going to be any trouble. This expedition, mother, is into the Munay country, where the Spanish founded a small post, but were wiped out by the Moros. We have no inland maps of this island to speak of, and the department commander wants them. Old Dato Masonbarong was in the post yesterday, and he assured us of his pacific intentions. He is at Momungan, and he also says that Dato Munay is well pleased with the American government; he will offer no trouble. I explained the nature of the march through the interpreter. You will encounter no obstacles, I am sure.”

“Of course, I hope not,” said Lieutenant Griggs, rising and looking at his watch. “Though if we do, I’ll show them what I’m made of. Well, we’ll have to bid adieu and get ready.”

He turned toward Eunice, and smiled with the unmistakable smile of the almost successful suitor. The younger man rose also, and the strik-

ing dissimilarity between them appealed to both the girl and her father.

Griggs was heavily built, a trifle red-faced, possessing a bulwark chest and an aggressive, smooth-shaven chin. His face was broad, but the nostrils were thinly drawn—as her father said, he “resembled Napoleon, by gad!” And to the girl he looked every inch the competent man and officer.

It was a shame that brother had so far forgotten the family honor as to put them in such financial straits, but her marriage to the first lieutenant would straighten that out. Also, in the absence of the love she felt should be the only reason for marrying, there was the consolation that she would at least get a real man.

Yet as her clear brown eyes took in the younger lieutenant, she could not meet his eager gaze. He stood, tall and straight as a ramrod, and exhaling an aroma of eager young manhood. Was it love—this strange disquietude that always filled her in his presence?

The mother’s thoughts were covering the situation also. Things were coming to a delightful head, she was sure. Eunice had held herself aloof until recently, but lately she seemed to have come to her senses. High time, too, with such a splendid representative of a splendid family suing for her hand! Wealth, position, luxury were offered her! Oh, *surely* she would be happy with such a desirable *parti*. He was certain to rise. Best of all, her blessed erring boy would be put on his feet again. As for this young upstart of a second lieutenant who advertised what he thought of Eunice in every glance—the presumption of him! A penniless youngster with only his monthly pay!

She turned to Lieutenant Griggs, and said:

“Good-by, my dear boy. When you come back from the march—”

“When I come back from the march—” the officer beamed at Eunice.

“—we hope to have something important to announce.” Triumph was hers as she shot a glance at the shave-tail.

"Manma!" exclaimed Eunice, blushing and turning into the house. She left at least one man with gloom around his heart—or was it two? Why did the colonel sigh as he watched them walk away? His eyes were on the younger lieutenant.

That afternoon M troop rode by to the creaking of saddle leather, the tinkling of canteens against tin cups and lariat pins, a picturesque column of yellow-clad men. Their belts were full of ammunition, and they looked to the man a reliant machine, riding behind a reliant leader. But the girl only glanced at the commander casually from the shade of her window—her gaze followed the officer at his side, and followed until her eyes became dim.

Three nights later M troop lay in the mud of a cañon bottom about thirty miles inland. Thirty miles is an easy day's march for cavalry on good roads—but this happened in Mindanao. It was after midnight—they had just completed a precarious, heartbreaking descent down a cliff side tangled with a labyrinth of vines and trees, while the rain, now ceased, had poured down on them in thunderous sheets. There had been no attempt at a regular camp. They had been ordered to sleep in the mud with their saddles for pillows, and had been glad to do so. For they were weary to the point of agony.

Conviviality had fled to parts unknown. The last three days had been a nightmare beyond even the tales of the older men of previous hikes. The first night, near Momungan, Private White had been slaughtered on post. So much for this peaceful hike!

They had wallowed through rice paddies, ridden across patches of cogon grass that reflected the sun like copper-plate, wallowed through more rice paddies, gone without water for hours, and climbed cliffs until they were ready to mutiny. They had followed their captain through worse than that, of course—they cursed the fact of his being at Riley on special duty—but he was a *white man*. He had not bullied and cursed them, nor made the unutterable

fatigue and misery doubly worse by unessential militarism, as this rule-monger had done.

They had no more idea where they were than blind men. The guide had lost the trail toward Munay in the mountains the night before. The rain had caught them still ensnared in the heavy forest growth, and they could only thank Providence that they had got down alive. The gloom of the night and their thoughts settled upon them like a pall, driving optimism to the dim past, and transforming their bearded-stubbled faces into masks of hate and hopelessness. Low comments passed from man to man.

"Hell is just over the next hill," growled Roder, a reënlisted man. "I have put in some fine days on these islands, but these last were the limit. Why they let such a mucker have a troop, I can't see. If the captain were here—"

"He'd make that bunch o' bluster toe the mark!" said Grogan heartily. "You remember when Griggs made us put our cartridge belts back on when we had them off to ease the dobie itch?"

"And made us keep our shirts buttoned up in the hot sun—"

"And made us groom those blasted horses for three hours after dark!"

"And made us police a camp in these jungles!"

"And put poor Whitey so far away from the other sentries that he couldn't see them, and gave the Moros a better chance to get him—which they did!"

The chorus of growls ran from man to man. "Company in misery" did not apply—their gloom was too deep. They counted up a host of grievances against the troop commander, and cursed him volubly for each one.

"I know it's just wasted wind," said Corporal Steward. "It won't do us any good to kick. But I can't help it. He's a devil in human form. I wouldn't mind it so much if he wasn't a man. I could stand being bullied by a whipper-snapper who has got puffed up over his shoulder straps and rides you rough. But when an officer as intelligent as he is, and who has all the earmarks of a

man, shows you that he thinks you're the scum of the earth, it gets me 'way down deep."

"That's the part that stings," said Corporal Brashares. "He's got the men taking him seriously. I'll admit that he's square in so far as being impartial is concerned, but I can see through him like a sieve. He's no man, and never was one."

"I'll have to differ with you there," said his bunkie on the right. It was Trevors, a recruit private. "Griggs is a buzz saw on wheels, but he's a man just the same. I'll hand it to him on that point."

"Oh, you will?" Trevors sensed that his friend was grinning in the darkness. Somehow Brashares had always worn that grin when he argued with him on army matters. For Brashares, although a young man, had to his credit four enlistments, while Trevors was a novice. "Well, there's no use arguing with a rookie," said Brashares pleasantly. "However, it's my last hitch. I don't want to serve under any more like him."

"Well," retorted Trevors, "when you enlist—and a man is a lunatic to enlist, I may add, for he sells himself body and soul—you don't expect to be put on the same social plane with the officers, do you? An enlisted man hasn't any right to expect consideration from officers who are gentlemen, has he?"

"H'm! You college men who slip into the service get a lot of philosophy out of your first hitch, don't you?" Again that kindly but ironical grin. "You make the mistake of judging the whole by one individual. It isn't *them*—it's just *him*! I want to soldier under a man—it takes a *man* to command *men*."

"Just how do you figure that?"

"By plain common sense and the laws of human nature. Not only in a scrap, but in post duty or anywhere—that is, to do it right. A bully is a coward. In a scrap he isn't there at all. And this Griggs is a bully, I tell you. I'd rather take the shavey there, and go into a mix-up."

"I can't see the point, nor can the

rest of the troop. I contend that Congress can take a man who has the necessary education, place him as an officer and a gentleman above you, and he puts on the shoulder straps and commands men. Personal qualifications are secondary. You don't suppose they have a testing machine at the Point for bravery and kindness and fairness and squareness, do you?"

"Listen to our baby boy!"

"You've got to obey them, haven't you?" exclaimed the nettled Trevors. "And they have the power behind them, haven't they? And they give the commands, don't they?"

"Hold on there! If they give them—if!"

"Well, don't they?"

"Most of them do—I'll say that."

"Well, then—"

"Say, were you ever in a scrap?"

"No. You know this is my first enlistment."

"You wait and see, then."

"But—"

"Quick, Watson, the needle!" Brashares grinned in the light of his cigarette. "You'll learn. Maybe you'll learn to-morrow, or some time before we get back."

"Do you think there'll be a fight?" came eagerly from the recruit.

"You know as much about that as I do. But I think so. And we're in a bad country. The Spanish didn't last as long as a missionary in the Cannibal Islands. Of course we're not those greasers, but just now we're here with thirty-three men out of sixty-five, account of the extra and special duty detailing, and if the Moros take a notion to go after us, you know they're as thick as rats in a granary. Cavalry is of necessity a force of mounted infantry in such a country; you won't see any Light Brigade charges. Let me tell you, too, that the Moro is far superior to the other tribes on these islands; when he spits on his hands and comes at you, it's a case of fight your way out, with the accent on the fight."

He leaned closer, and continued in lower tones:

"Here's another thing makes me think there's going to be trouble. You remember when Griggs went over to 'abla' with old Dato Masonbarong about the trail near Momungan the other night? Well, I was with him, you know, and coming back to camp in the dark, I saw him stop and heard a girl's voice behind. I walked on a little farther, but not out of earshot. It was the old dato's daughter—she is a pippin and can talk English. It turns out that he had been making love to her and had thrown her over. He told her that he was done with her, and was going to marry Miss Eunice—and I wish you'd have heard the way she lit into him. I lit out, too, and he came soon after. Now, her old daddy has a weakness for her, unusual in a Moro—also these guns look good—so there you have it in a nutshell."

"That's a nice mess for a man to be mixed up in," said Trevors disgustedly. "He's going to marry Miss Eunice, too."

"That's what gets me," Brashares scowled. "Of course it's none of an enlisted man's business, but I feel a personal interest in Eunice. The old colonel used to send me out as escort on her rides when she wore pigtails. The shavey, who takes my eye, believe me, is up to his neck in love with her, but mamma and money are going to win the deal, I guess. The shavey knows the story of Griggs and the Moro girl, too, but you can gamble he never said a word."

"He ought to have gone and told her."

"Forget it! He's too much of a man. Let her choose for herself without any knocking. But for two cents I'd tell her myself."

Trevors was silent for a minute. Then he asked suddenly:

"But say—about this scrap—what does a man feel like, and how do men act?"

"Swallow a package of tobacco, and you'll get the feeling," grinned Brashares. "It's hard on the stomach. I never saw any heroes yet. Most of them are in the volunteers, and I have

always been a regular. Let's go to sleep now—my tongue is swelled from lack of a blessed drink. And the dobie itch has got me nutty."

Trevors was still intent on the questioning. "Say," he vociferated, "if the Moros do come—why, when we get the thrills of the trumpet calls and the boys get up and whoop—say, we Americans can lick the earth!"

Brashares choked and snuggled in his blanket; fatigue weighed in on Trevors like lead, and he went to sleep. Around them lay the troop in chilled slumber, while the sentries swallowed back and forth through the mud.

When the sun reared a copper rim over the hills in the morning, it revealed the cañon camp in such ludicrous lights that it rang with laughter. The beard-stubbled faces of the men looked out at one another through whimsical designs of mud. They resembled walking statues of clay. Then a spring of clear water was discovered at one side of the hill; they rushed to it, and drank till bursting seemed imminent. A soggy breakfast was hastily swallowed. Then began the work of extricating the pack mules from the gigantic tree limbs on the cliff side, into which they had stumbled in their descent into the cañon. This took hard labor and ingenious contrivance. The troop commander was in a hurry, and frequently "bawled them out," till, when the last "jar head" was cursed into line, they sat mounted before him in sweaty, savage sullenness.

They now had the first chance to inspect clearly the place they were in. Behind them was the heavily forested hill they had come down; to the right was another beetling peak, covered with blackened tree trunks. In front of them was a patch of cogon grass, tough as wire, and growing ten feet high. Beyond that, and reaching almost around them to the left, was a sloping bald knob. The only outlet except the climb behind was a choked trail to the left. They were in a natural jail.

Their commander was addressing

them now. "Men," he said, "we have been lucky to a certain extent. We have stumbled into the heart of the Munay country. Out that trail is the old Spanish fort by the side of a small lake. I do not apprehend any trouble, but remember"—he leaned toward them and concluded with heroic emphasis—"if we do meet the enemy, keep your nerves compact, listen to the commands, and hit them hard!"

A thrill ran through them. They took in his Napoleonic figure, his aggressive jaw—and the apparent confidence, control, and fearlessness of him filled them with delight. Forgiven in an instant were all the grudges. He had the one redeemable, all-important quality, and M. troop would follow him into the jaws of death.

"Fours left!" he commanded. "March!"

Barely had they wheeled into column when his startled "Halt!" brought them to a standstill. Over the bald knob's top loomed a horde of Moros, two hundred strong, menacingly eying the little column beneath. They were armed, not only with bolos and barongs, but with every make of firearm known, of all calibers—and the range was only about three hundred yards!

"The curtain's up," said Brashares, with a wry grin.

Simultaneously a voice shouted hoarsely: "Fight on foot!" They obeyed in a bound, but a common thought flashed over the troop—how different this hoarse sound from the ringing voice they knew!

At this command in the cavalry, three men of each set of fours dismount with their rifles, each linking his horse to the next; number three hands his reins to number four, who stays mounted to lead the horses. The dismounted men spring into column to the right of the horses. The noncommissioned officer carrying the guidon immediately takes charge of the led horses, and moves them out of the line of fire.

As one man, the well-drilled troop fell into the formation, the dismounted men eagerly awaiting the next command, while Brashares started to move

the horses. He had barely started when he was brought to a halt and ordered to dismount with his men. They did so in consternation, for it placed them in ineffectual positions on the ground, directly in the line of fire; they gazed at the officer in amazement. And, gazing, they witnessed a man transformed.

His neck was swelled, red as fire, his eyes glassy, and from his lips burst a harsh jumble of sounds. He had dismounted, and was waving his saber to accentuate what he evidently meant for commands, but no one could gain any inkling of what was expected; they looked at his face, gummy with a cold sweat, distorted into a madman's visage—and in a flash the perfect machine became a befuddled, disorganized mob.

Brashares, disgusted, had sat down on a rock, still holding his horse's reins. The logical thing, of course, was to get the men into a skirmish line as quickly as possible, so that they might offer a smaller target and take advantage of any protection offered. He watched the cooler heads seeking to spread out in some semblance of a skirmish line, but each move was interrupted by the frothing commander, who cursed them and shoved them into new positions. Confusion had mounted the throne in but a few seconds, and while it was at its height, a hail of lead screamed through them.

Howls of anguish arose. The horses who were not hit bolted down the trail, a flurry of hoofs and distended nostrils. The others, moaning pitifully, fell in queer, distorted heaps. The majority of the men, with the instinct of self-preservation, made the first sensible move, falling flat. Some stood as if petrified, till knocked down by Sergeant Owens, who had broken away from the officer and was now exhorting the men. Out of the tail of his eye, Brashares saw the commander shove Owens down in turn, but Brashares was busy with his own affairs just then.

His horse was unharmed, but now he rose, shot him through the temple, sighed, and sank back of the dead animal.

"Oh, 'compact nerves' and 'hit them

hard,'" he muttered, in a singsong tone. His lips were twisted in a quizzical grin, but the brown eyes were cold. In front of him the troop was beginning to return the fire. He could see that their efforts were fruitless, however, for they were under the hideous spell of disorganization, terror, and the sense of being near death with no chance to work out their own salvation; they must obey the orders of him who was issuing no orders at all, but a babel of oaths. The enemy's fire, which they had taken at the height of their bewilderment, had put the last touches to their terror, and though they poured a stream of lead in the general direction of the Moros, most of them were firing without aiming.

"Why," quoth Brashares, "damme if some of those recruits aren't shooting in the air!" He shoved his oil-smeared rifle across the animal's buttocks, aiming carefully at the shine of a mahogany bolo scabbard. "But what can you expect? Lord, I saw a bunch of volunteers once in a pinch—but this is worse. Ah—*thought* it was about three hundred yards." He fired again. "First blood," he grinned, "right in the compact nerves, too."

He watched a Moro roll down the slope, gripping his stomach as though doubled up with the cholera. Brashares' grin was cut short by the whistle of a bullet over his head.

"Lord, I didn't think you brown bellies could shoot that close—but out of that bunch some one is bound to land. Gee! There must be a million. They're as thick as rats in a granary. And what a beautiful show we've got!"

He adjusted his sights carefully, aimed steadily, and fired. "And now you can say 'Hallelujah' to your Allah, my son. Wonder how many of the fellows are hit? There's Bailey over there gripping his shoulder—and Burgman all tied in a knot—he's done for. And the shavetail? Ah—there he is, over there with Burgman's rifle, shooting with the rest. Small chance he had to do anything else."

Amid the whine of the slugs that cast up vicious spurts of dirt at their heels,

two mules leaped past him, bent for the open trail. Their pack saddles swayed from side to side. As he noticed their contents, he gasped.

"The extra ammunition! Where in glory are those packers? Oh, no, you *don't*, you jar head!" He had brought down one mule with a shot through the back. The bellow of a Colt's forty-five preceded the other's fall, and Brashares noticed the three packers safely fortified behind their prone horses, one of them holding a smoking revolver in his hand.

"Much obliged, old chap. We'll need those clips the way the boys are wasting lead now—if the renegades don't get us first. Wonder how Trevors is making it?"

He searched for his bunkie amid the uproar. He discerned him now on hands and knees, with head down, and body retching convulsively.

"He's hit," was the thought that blanched his face. Looking closer, he grinned in momentary relief. "Nope—just sick, that's all. Ah!"

McCoy, a reënlisted man from Kentucky, had risen unsteadily, and now shambled aimlessly to the right. His eyes were glassy—his throat worked as though swallowing. He was dragging his rifle by the muzzle, and at the third or fourth step let go of it; his knees began to sag till finally he lay inert.

The hills rang with the triumphant shouts of the Moros. They became ever bolder, many of them springing from prone positions to leap up and dance mockingly. The bellow of the old muzzle-loaders blended with the sharp cracks of Spanish Mausers, Krags, shotguns, and the latest Springfields; and through the smoke that lay in a haze, due to the black powder they used, Brashares could see that many of them were now dropping down the slope to encircle the cogon grass and attack them from the flank. And simultaneously with McCoy's fall, a scream came from the left—Corporal Steward was crawling on his hands and knees to the rear, screaming pitifully.

"Oh, why couldn't the old man be here?" wailed Brashares to a tall, raw-

boned packer who had crawled over to his side. "Look at that maniac," designating the troop commander. "Look at him! Owens is trying to give the fellows the range, and he is cussing so no one can hear. We're not going to last five minutes—some of the brown devils are slipping into that grass now."

"I came over here so I could cash in alongside a real man," said the packer candidly. "I've been noticing you. I was in the Twentieth Kansas with Funston—and I'm going to cash in hard." His hat blew off, and he ducked instinctively. An ugly light played over his lean face.

"I never saw a man go to pieces so bad. You're right—we're not going to last five minutes, unless—" He shoved his Colt's across the horse, and pointed it at the commander's back.

Brashares grasped his hand. "I'd love to let you, I'll admit," he said, "but don't—the Moros will get him the way he's running around."

"It'll be too late then," said the other savagely. "Why, he's committing murder right now! What justice is there in letting him demoralize the whole outfit so they're helpless? Let me finish him, and give the shavey a chance."

Brashares grinned at the other's can-dor, but shook his head. "There may be some other way," he muttered, his eyes following the officer.

It was a scant three feet to the nearest trooper, Jack Roder; he was now looking back toward the rock near Brashares. He half rose to seek its protection. Just at this instant the troop commander came stumbling his way, cursed him, and shoved him down. It placed him momentarily with his back to Brashares, and just as he started to move away something occurred that has never been chronicled in army records.

A Springfield flew between his legs, tripping him heavily. His head struck the rock in his fall. Oblivion followed the thud of an earnest Colt's butt against his temple.

"Fine!" breathed the packer, and

"Very neat!" quoth Brashares, and looked up, startled, into the eyes of the second lieutenant.

Had he seen? A horrible fear shook him for an instant, and he saw Bilibid, the military prison at Manila, staring him in the face for uncountable years. But only for an instant—the officer's face betrayed no sign. Indeed, it seemed to breathe a fellowship, unheard of between rank and file, for a fleeting second—and was he dreaming, or was it real, that almost imperceptible lowering of one eyelid? It passed as he turned in answer to the packer's serene:

"The first lieutenant is down, sir—bleeding from the scalp—must have got hit by a ricochetting bullet—hope it's not bad, but now, sir, it's up to you to deliver the goods and get us out of here! You've got a troop that will fight like caged rats if you go to it right." At the end his voice was gruff, and he looked the officer coolly in the eye. He was a civilian, and could speak his mind with impunity.

The young West Pointer needed no prompting, however. The red blood of a red-blooded nation had been freely given him at birth. He turned toward the firing line, grabbed Trumpeter Albraith by the collar, and pulled him to his feet.

"Blow 'Cease firing,'" he said.

For an instant the trumpeter was hesitant—his lips were dry and puckered with the fever of terror that shook him, and his popping eyes seemed glued to the lieutenant's face as he essayed the call. Only a squawk resulted. Reaching to his belt, the officer unhooked his canteen and dashed water in Albraith's face, shaking him roughly at the same time. It brought him from his trance with a jerk, and the cañon reéchoed with the ringing tones of his bugle. The firing ceased after a few stray shots by the absorbed men, the latter being cursed into quiet by the sergeants. Turning on their elbows, they beheld a new factor in this crisis; seeing, their faces lit with a savage joy.

"Men," said the new factor, "I want you to listen to this—your troop commander is wounded, and I'm in command; and if I don't get you out of this hell hole in twenty minutes, I deserve to be flayed alive. Who said we were

licked? We can lick the socks off anything this side of hell! Are you *with* me?"

Even the sight of him, let alone his words, thrilled them through and through, as he stood there in the sunlight, leaning toward them with one fist clenched, his hat replaced by a bloody handkerchief around the forehead. Around his feet appeared vicious little spurts of dirt, totally unnoticed for the moment in the savageness that filled him. His eyes gleamed ferociously above the grim lines of his lips, and the power within him leaped from every line of his tall figure.

Were they *with* him? A blood-curdling yell seemed to split the very heavens. He held up his hand.

"Get over behind these horses—at once, now. Move!"

They sprang up, running back to the protection offered by the dead animals, amid a furious fire from above. As they dropped into position, Brashares caught Trevors by the arm, and pulled him down between him and the packer. Roder lay behind the horse next to them. Some of the men, still dazed by the fear that had gripped them, ran blindly here and there until pulled down by their comrades.

The young lieutenant had stopped Sergeant Owens, and pulled him down beside him back of one of the horses. Then he called to Brashares: "Pull Lieutenant Griggs into some protected spot." As Brashares lugged him behind the rock, the officer turned again to Owens.

"I want you to go to the other end of the line, sergeant, and help me get the men calmed into some semblance of order. And take it easy with them—you can't blame them for their condition now. I almost ran myself," naïvely, "but this troop is composed of men, and we're going to *fight* from now on. What is the range, as you get it?"

"Three hundred yards to the top of the hill, sir, and two points windage."

"Very well. Go ahead now, and get them into shape to hit something—don't want to fire a shot until they can. Sergeant James," calling to a burly,

gray-headed soldier, "take this end of the line, and talk to the younger men, Give them the range, and inspect those sights. If they're too excited to adjust them, do it for them. And hurry now; I think we'll be attacked from the flank in a few moments."

At the sudden quiet on the American side, the firing from the hill dwindled to a few stray shots, as if in doubt of the troop's whereabouts—then recommenced. But the numbers on the knob seemed to have decreased, judging from the spurts of flame that came from there.

Lieutenant Randal scanned the horizon anxiously.

"I've got to get them in line quick," he muttered, springing up. "They'll be coming on the run around that cogon grass in about ten minutes—and there go some of them to the lake, to come at us from that side."

He went from man to man, oblivious of the bullets and cries of "Lay down, lay down!" applying a dash of water here, a kind word there, a stern shaking-up to this man, and a word of approval to that. The seasoned men were with him in a trice, applying bandages to their bunkies' wounds, inspecting the recruits' sights, calling reassuring words to one another.

Out of chaos emerged order, each man's potentialities reviving under this tonic of confidence in the new commander, till they became their reliant selves.

In five minutes, Randal had gathered the reins of perfect control as does the charioteer his numerous ribbons. The troop was rearranged in squads, each with a squad leader, two taking the front, the outer squads the flanks in case of attack there; he had found the extra ammunition and set the trumpeters to spreading it behind the men.

"Now!" he yelled. "At the hill! Fire at will! Commence firing!"

M troop tightened its belt, and began to fight.

Brashares inspected Trevors with a kind grin. The recruit was deathly white, his lips drawn back over his teeth in an aggressive snarl. The frozen

stare of his eyes spoke eloquently of his terror-gripped soul, for his tongue could not; it clove to the top of his mouth as he tried to speak.

"Never mind, son—I've been through the mill myself. Bite on the bullet, old chap, and don't let them see you're afraid. Ain't hit any place? No? That's good. Now let me look at that gun. Say, old man, you're firing at point-blank range—raise the notch. Now—hold on there—wait till the shavey gives the word—see that brown bunch up there? When you commence to shoot, aim low, and watch for your hits, same as at target practice. Then keep raising till you get him—and fire slow—one hit is worth a barrel of noise. There—go to it."

All through the troop the older men were giving the same advice. The modern rifle is no toy, but a small cannon that is too unwieldy for snappy, short-range target shooting at small objects. It is a terrible weapon at any range up to twelve hundred yards when fired correctly, but this requires practice and good judgment, also mechanical calculations. The gun kicks your shoulder black and blue when held wrong. As fast as the new men overcame this, their fire began to tell. Clouds of smoke from certain points appeared no more. Screams floated to their ears. Moros who leaped up in fanatical bravery dropped in distorted heaps, and the troop whooped with joy.

"There's *class* to us now," said Brashares.

The packer had secured McCoy's rifle; he now grunted:

"There's *class* to the hole I put in *that gent*," nodding toward the hill. He showed Brashares a clip of bullets creased with a knife across the end of the projectile.

"Sure," grinned the corporal. "I 'dummed' mine before I started."

Trevors had not uttered a word as yet, but was firing carefully. His face was white still—the whiteness of the blood lust now. Suddenly he yelled excitedly:

"I've killed the brown son of a gun! I've killed him, I've killed him!"

The men near him laughed outright.

"Did you?" Brashares stared at him humorously. "Well, you cute little soldier!"

Trevors laughed in spite of himself. "Well, it was my first, you know. But—I saw McCoy fall. Why is it they always picture them as throwing their arms out and falling on their backs?"

"Humph! They see this kind of stuff in the perspective, I guess. Don't guess any painter has ever seen the real article this close. I feel myself waxing artistic in these, my last, moments," ironically. "You were speaking of the picturesque scene the other day; how does this appeal to you?"

Trevors took in the surroundings—the dead horses, the khaki-shirted men aiming across them; the faces set in grim, harsh lines, streaked with sweat and dirt; the cogon grass in front, the surrounding hills bathed in a sparkling sunlight. His gaze lingered on the spurts of smoke on the hill, then came back to the troop.

"It would make a fine picture —"

"Yes, a duplicate of Custer's last grand-stand play!" said the packer.

"But what I can't get over is the way the different men look in a scrap."

"Think they'd look like a church social?"

"No—but look at Smithy—he's so white you could make a black mark with your finger on his face, under the dirt—and next to him is O'Hearn, his face blacker than his mustache. You wouldn't know him for the same man—looks as ugly as a bull. And there's Sergeant Whittier—his mouth is working, and his tongue is licking his lips. His eyes are half closed like he was sleepy, too—but they're not scared—it's not from that, I judge, for they're all blazing away."

"Whittier always did look like that in a scrap. He was with us in China, and he's not afraid of anything except a woman. But now look down there at Grogan if you want to see a sight."

Trevors looked. And so, from time to time, did all the troop. For Grogan, the best-built man among them, and always the trimmest-looking, was in his

element. His mustaches took on a fiercer appearance, but his lips grinned in supreme joy. He whooped with ecstasy, shouting: "Oh, Lord! I must be wild!" and blazed away with a rapidity that kept the trumpeters scrambling for ammunition. Now and then he lifted his rifle and spat on the barrel—which action pleased him mightily, for the saliva popped off the hot steel like corn in a fire.

"You're not hitting a thing!" remonstrated the lieutenant.

"I can hit 'em at a thousand yards just as well as I can at a hundred!" belied Grogan. Even the wounded forgot their misery to laugh, for it was well known that Grogan could hit them at a thousand just as well as he could at a hundred. An old soldier of several enlistments, with service in Cuba, China, and the islands, his discharge papers covered with engagement records, he had never been able to master the use of the rifle, and "could not hit a flock of barns if it was tied to his nose." However, he could throw lead in a stream—the ground about him was strewn with empty cartridges—and men loved to be near him in a fight, for he was a lovable swashbuckler to whom this was the acme of all joys.

Trevors' eyes filmed in admiration. "If we could all look at war like he does—"

"You couldn't live on this old ball. Everybody would be fighting all the time. It's a good thing that human nature is what it is, I guess. But when you have to go to it, Grogan is worth his weight in gold to a troop—why, he's got most of the recruits as cocky as a lot of bantams already—and with the shavey in command now, our stock has gone up one hundred per cent."

Roder had just asked for some more shells, and Trevors tossed them over, grinning at his friend. Roder smiled back—strangely, he continued smiling, still clutching the shells in his outstretched hand. Trevors' grin faded to a look of perplexity, as Roder's tongue stuck out at him slowly as if in derision, while his legs straightened out, the toes digging into the dirt; then he noticed

the small blue hole in the forehead, and understood.

"Roder's dead!" he gasped. "He just spoke, and he's *dead*—he's grinning at me yet."

"Yes, he's dead." The packer reached over, and closed Roder's eyes, pulling his hat over the face. "It isn't so pleasant seeing it this close."

Barely had word passed down the line that Roder had "got his," when they realized that the firing had almost ceased on the bald knob. They scanned the trail and the end of the cogon grass anxiously. A tremor of nervous expectancy ran through them resembling that of a runner waiting for the pistol shot. The command, "Cease firing!" was blown.

"Men," the officer spoke, "they're coming at us, probably from both sides. Don't leave these positions until I give the word. Put your sights down to point-blank range, and shoot at the bellies. Get them before the majority reach here, because we will have small chance against their bolos at short range."

It came from the right first. The Moros had timed their movements poorly. There leaped from the cogon grass a horde of black-toothed brutes who filled the air with cries of exultation. They swung their bolos in whistling circles as they ran into the stream of lead that met them, abandoning their rifles in their fanatical desire to come to close quarters.

Although they were mowed down in swaths like pins in an alley, they came on, till a few of them had reached the horses. For a time then the cañon was filled with the sound of yells, snarls, the clash of bolos against gun barrels, the crunch of skulls crushed by the gun butts.

In the midst of it all, a tall, hatless figure with a handkerchief tied around his head swung a murderous gun butt. A vicious mirth snarled his lips, the eyes were cold with a scintillant gleam.

"Remember Private White!" he called, and the troop shot and clubbed in a haze that filled their eyes with red.

Lieutenant Randal was everywhere at

once. His spirit filled them till they became irresistible; the attack was repulsed, and they lay panting once more behind the horses, while strewn before them lay piles of long-haired savages whose dead eyes stared at them malevolently above gaping mouths.

Among them lay Smith, gory and headless. And here and there among the soldiers a delirious curse spoke of the pain of blood cuts, but as the sweating men tied these up there was a predominant feeling of exultation stiffening them all. They had met the enemy at his own game, and licked him; also they had a *man* in command.

"Let 'em all come—we're here first!" bellowed the irrepressible Grogan.

"Change the constitution of Arkansas? No, *sirree!* You might as well try to change—" And the troop whooped in unison with the solemn-faced individual from Kentucky, whose features were now lit with a droll savagery.

"Men, they're a long time coming from the trail side." The blood-smeared lieutenant spoke hurriedly. "Now, we've been caged like rats long enough. I'm going to beat them at their own game. I want a half dozen expert riflemen and sharpshooters to go with the first sergeant around the cogon grass, skirt that bald knob, and take them from the flank. Speak up."

Among the answers was Grogan's "Yes, sir!" and Randal found time to smile. "You stay with us, Grogan—we need you here. Have you got them picked out, Sergeant Owens? Very well. Now, go as directed, and unless we're attacked, we'll wait until you give us a signal of three shots in the air before we start. In case you hear us firing, come down through the grass on that side, and join in—but if you are quick enough, I think that we can drive them out in the open."

The detail that left were all old soldiers, the best shots in the troop. Brashares went with them.

M troop waited in anxiety for the climax. They sucked at their wounds, and filled their belts, nervous as a dog in leash. Before the detail got out of

sight, however, a little tableau was enacted before their eyes which held their attention.

Tulares, the last man in the file, had suddenly limped, following a shot from the grass, dropped his rifle, then whipped out his revolver to fire at a Moro, who now sprang out at him with a blood-smeared bolo.

A nervous shock of pain had caused him to drop the rifle and clutch at his leg, and the Moro's appearance was so sudden that he had no time to secure the more effective arm.

As the savage circled around him warily, he pivoted slowly on his good leg, his head sunk between hunched shoulders, his jaw thrust out aggressively. As he fired once, twice, Brashares, who was running back, noticed that the savage's eyes were intent on Tulares's pistol hand. Each time he pulled, the Moro leaped to the right just at the instant the hand contracted.

"Slip that little finger under the butt," yelled Brashares. "Can't you see that he's wise to your trigger pull? You're shooting to the right." The next shot caught the Moro between the eyes, and Tulares kicked at him as he fell.

"I ought to have known better—but I never was much with the pistol. That guy is a deserter out of the Constabulary, I bet you, or he would never have been wise to that."

"Sure," said the corporal. "Are you hurt much? Well, let's go, then—I think we'll have plain sailing around the hill—can't see anything stirring."

While the troop waited, Trevors found himself studying the scene with the novice's eyes that photographed the impressions on his brain in indelible lines. Picturesque? He failed to see it now. The gruesome reality was utterly devoid of the picturesque. He ached to get away—to see the end of this.

Three shots from the hill, followed by a medley of staccato reports, brought them all to their feet, set them running eagerly down the trail, Lieutenant Randal in the lead. From tree to tree, from grass patches to boulders, they leaped and crawled, shooting as they ran, or as they lay behind each bit of cover.

The Moros, sneaking through the glen, bent on surprise, were in turn caught unawares themselves, and between two murderous crisscross fires. What had looked so easy to them became now a horrible nightmare that was led by a young giant, whom nothing could stop.

To M troop anything seemed possible behind this man—they could lick the earth. What had been a situation where certain death seemed imminent became a murderous game, with themselves as aggressors. The fight became a rout. They brained and shot with no mercy till they drove the last Moros past the blackened remains of the old Spanish fort, into the lake. The fight was ended, and Brashares, leaning on his rifle, looked about him, and grinned.

"The curtain's down," he muttered.

The hike back was a thing that awoke them in their dreams for weeks, shuddering. It was a half day before they had secured the remaining horses, fourteen being dead, and there were eight mules left of the twelve. The delirious first lieutenant was trussed on a mule until he was able to ride; even then he did not attempt to take the troop, but rode in a swaying stupor. They were content to leave him so.

Numerous halts were made to ease the wounded and replace them on the horses. Rations and water were scarce—the moans for the latter were heart-rending. They had been forced to bury the dead under rock piles at the scene of the fight, for the tropical sun forbade moving.

One dominant force kept all their spirits keyed up to the exertion, however—young Randal appeared at their sides always when the delirium was worse, his cool hand and cheering words straightening their thoughts back into sanity. He walked constantly among them, encouraging, exhorting, realizing that if he gave up, the men would stop in sheer exhaustion.

Finally the Kansan suggested that if he could have a horse, he would go to Momungan and bring help—he knew the trail from this on, he said. They

watched him depart with eager eyes as they sank down to rest for a time by a blessed pond. No Moros bothered them now; they had been too thoroughly whipped—for a while.

"One thing," said Trevors. "I never saw any datos in that mix-up."

"It's seldom you catch any of them, unless you get them into a trap. They're too wise—it's the bondsmen we get."

Torn by the inroads of fatigue, wounds, hunger, and thirst, it was but a grotesque travesty of a troop that was picked up by the hospital train and escort at Momungan. But even then they tried to hold up their whirling heads aggressively, for theirs was the pride of a victory won under almost impossible conditions.

A week later M troop, with the exception of the wounded in the hospital, began to resemble its old spick-and-span self. First Lieutenant Griggs was still confined in his quarters with fever. The men had been excused for a few days from post duties by a well-pleased colonel. They basked in the admiration of the squadron, and patronized the rest of the troops as becomes the outfit that has had the first set-to and won its spurs. The clean-shaven second lieutenant took them out to drill for the first time that morning, and they went through the old cut-and-dried formations with a new gusto.

"I haven't heard of any engagement over there as yet," said Brashares to his bunkie, designating the colonel's house.

"And what do you think the sergeant major at headquarters told me last night? That blank fool shavey went and reported that the first lieutenant had been wounded by a glancing bullet while coolly forming the troop for action, and that same first lieutenant is going to be given a high recommendation for bravery on the field of action!"

"What? That settles it, then!" Brashares became gloomy as he puckered his brow in thought. His partner could get no more out of him about the matter.

That night it was dark as pitch. A

lone figure sat on the porch of the colonel's house—a musing girl who leaned her chin in one hand on the railing. She could hear the colonel puttering around in his study, while her mother was in the kitchen giving directions to the muchachos. Nothing had been heard from the first lieutenant except that he was too ill to call or receive any one. The girl had sent him dainties and her commiseration, hoping he would be around soon to let them see the "conquering hero." At least he had justified her expectations. But why this disquietude over the continued absence of the second lieutenant? She had heard the glowing story of the fight at second-hand from a dozen officers—was it because she wanted to hear it from a participant? She shook herself irritably; then almost screamed as a whisper came to her right at her elbow.

"It's me—Brashares," the voice whispered hurriedly, "and I know I'm taking awful chances butting in this way—but will you listen?"

"Yes—what is it, corporal? Speak a little louder—the folks are in the house."

Hurriedly he plunged into his tale. As he proceeded the girl became wide-eyed, furiously red, and gasping in turn. "And he did *that*!" and "He never said a word!" she said over and over. The fact that Brashares was so intimate with the state of affairs did not surprise her much, for she had known the big, clean fellow, in a way, since she wore pigtails. He gave her a new pic-

ture of the fight, exactly as it happened, the details of the entanglement with the Moro girl—and painted the young officer in glowing colors.

"And now," he finished, "I've held this till I couldn't check it any longer, so I've told you. It was none of my business, except that I have sisters at home, and I couldn't see a girl like you get tied to a man of that sort without giving her judgment a show. You know what I'll get if this comes out—but I know *you* won't tell."

Giving her no time for answer, he slipped away, unaware of a tall old man who had come to the window unobserved, halted noiselessly, and heard the whole recital. Nor was he aware that as soon as he left, the colonel slipped up behind his daughter and took her hungrily in his old arms.

A month later First Lieutenant Griggs was quietly transferred out of the regiment. He went to the States on special duty, they said. Second Lieutenant Randal rode in command of M troop. Life was a pleasure for them now. The shavetail radiated an infectious buoyancy and happiness, for was he not engaged to the finest girl in the world?

One night Brashares showed his bunkie a ring, mysteriously sent. It was an exquisite piece of workmanship, wrought from old gold. And for the hundredth time he nudged Trevors.

"Didn't I tell you, you old bunch of contradictions? It takes a *man* to command *men*!"



AN EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES

WHEN J. W. Mitchell was the Russian correspondent of the Associated Press, the head of the German branch of the house of Rothschild visited St. Petersburg, and it became Mitchell's business to find out what had brought the great financier to that city. Mitchell, who is famous for his brilliant brain and his dull-looking clothes, found and interviewed Rothschild.

At the close of the talk, the money king, thinking that Mitchell was a poor fellow on the verge of starvation, fished out of his vest pocket a sovereign, and, with a patronizing air, handed it to him.

Whereupon, the newspaper writer, producing a five-dollar gold piece, extended it to Rothschild, and said, in a bored manner:

"Have one of mine."

The Adventurer

HE had braved the hungry ocean when the same was in commotion, he had floated on the wreckage of his tempest-shattered bark; he had flirted in deep waters with the merman's wives and daughters, he had scrapped through seven sessions with a large man-eating shark.

He had roamed in regions polar, where there's no effulgence solar, he had slain the festive walrus and the haughty arctic bear; and his watchword had been spoken in the wastes by whites unbroken, and he shelled out many gumdrops to the natives living there.

In the jungles, dark and fearful, where the tiger, fat and cheerful, gnaws the bones of foreign hunters, he had gone, unscathed, his way; he had whipped a big constrictor, and emerged the smiling victor from a scrimmage with a hippo, which was fond of deadly fray.

He was shot with poisoned arrows and his tale of anguish harrows up the bosom of the reader, but he lived to journey home; he was chased by wolves in Russia, thrown in prison cell in Prussia, and was captured by fierce bandits in the neighborhood of Rome. He had lived where dwells the savage whose ambition is to ravage and to fill his cosy wigwam with a handsome line of scalps; he had lived with desert races, sought the strange and distant places, he had stood upon the summit of the loftiest of Alps.

To his home at last returning, filled with sentimental yearning, "Now," he cried, "farewell to danger—I have left its stormy track!" Far from scenes of strife and riot he desired long years of quiet, but a casting from an airship fell three miles and broke his back.

Walt Mason

The Sunken Submarine

By Captain Danrit

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Through his friendship with the inventor of an oxygen machine, a captain in the French army has the apparatus installed in the biggest submarine built for the French navy. It is called the *Dragon Fly*, and is commanded by an old schoolmate of the army officer, Commandant D'Elbee. As a return for his efforts he insists that the commandant shall take him down on the trial trip. They submerge at Tunis and are to run under the Mediterranean to Bizerta, but as they are dropping down to a safe distance beneath the surface for the under-water trip there is a tremendous crash and the submarine stands on end. Yvonne, the Breton quartermaster, is explaining the working of the big torpedoes to the army officer, and rushes to the emergency bulkhead, slams the door, and locks it. As he finishes they notice a tiny stream of water creeping in and realize that the submarine has filled and sunk to the bottom of the sea. The torpedo tube suggests itself as an avenue of escape, and Yvonne nobly offers to stay behind and face certain death in order to shoot the officer through the tube to safety. As the captain is about to crawl into it the quartermaster discovers that there is no powder in the ammunition locker, and so this method of escape is denied them. Hope revives when the landsman finds the trapdoor covering the diver's sluice beneath the bottom of the boat. They open it and go down into the well, where they turn on the compressed air in an effort to equalize the pressure on the outer trap, which must be opened to permit them to leave the submarine. They are unable to stand the tremendous pressure, and before they can open the cover they are overcome. Yvonne has just strength enough left to turn off the air. When they have recovered they return to the torpedo room and realize that they are both hungry and thirsty. Driven to despair of any hope of rescue, the captain decides on suicide. While the other sleeps he goes to the door of the engine room and throws it open so that the water may rush in and engulf them.

VII—(Continued).

THE sea did not enter; it was no longer there. The engine room was disclosed to my eyes. Not a drop of sea water was in it. But, if I were to live a hundred years, I should never forget the sight I looked upon. Two lamps were still burning in the square, low, convex-ceilinged room; one lighted the engine, the other, the wall opposite the heavy flywheel. They caused the brass and steel to glitter, and shone on the twelve big cylinders in couples, and on the cast-iron framework buried in the floor, and on the dials of all sort arranged along the partition. And above all, they revealed a tragedy of a dreadful kind.

As I have already said, access was obtained from the engine room to the instrument room above by means of a ladder, and through an oval trapdoor just large enough to allow the passage of a man's body. This trapdoor in the

ceiling was just in front of the door I had opened. It was the only aperture allowing the engineers to escape in case of danger. To try flight by our door was, of course, to get into a pudding bag. On the ladder, leading up to the trap, two corpses were clasped in attitudes that indicated only too clearly the struggle that had taken place between them.

I recognized Renaut, the engineer, with whom Jacques had talked for a moment in my presence, and who had spoken so enthusiastically of his approaching visit to the country. I seemed to hear him still saying: "Air, space, snow, glaciers, a landscape where one breathes freely in the sun." Poor fellow! He longed for space.

The other was Niclaus, the assistant, the woolly-bearded sailor with the hard, deceitful eyes.

Both were stiff and cold. And their attitude—alas!

The lid of the trap worked in a groove

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This story began in the March Month-en-POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained from any news dealer.

by means of two brass handles. Four nuts, like those I had just unscrewed, served, when the lid had been closed, to fasten the inner leather covering against the caoutchouc frame, so as to shut the aperture hermetically. I could see that the lid was not entirely closed, prevented by the forearm of Niclaus, which was thrust between it and the side. The assistant's other hand clutched Renaut's face with brutal force, and his teeth were fixed in the engineer's left arm, which, as also the right one, was engaged in a fruitless endeavor to slide the lid home. In this position death had surprised them both, Niclaus half hanging, and Renaut straining to accomplish the task which his assistant thwarted.

In the engine room, as elsewhere, the orders were: "Shut all the doors." And the engineer had thought only of obeying them.

Renaut's face bore traces of the assistant's long nails; one of the scratches had furrowed his neck, which must have bled freely, for, unlike that of Niclaus, his face was bloodless. Not a sign of the bleeding, however, subsisted; the sea had carried it all away.

But could the sea have withdrawn, and how could this compartment, after filling with water which oozed through into the tube-room, have become empty and almost dry? The problem presented was a strange one, and my troubled faculties, my fevered head did not help me much to elucidate it at the moment. Even the deductions I had just made only came to me later. The horror of the spectacle constituting this battle of corpses, so to speak, held me spellbound on the threshold. Soon a single idea assailed me, summing up my disappointment: No water!

My amazement was such that I did not remark Yvonnet creeping between my legs and disappearing under the lower case of the engine. But I can never forget his voice, crying out to me, as he paused in his drinking:

"Water, my friend—water—quick!"

Lying on his back amid the heavy uprights in which the motor was fixed, he was holding his mouth under the discharge tap of the cistern that contained

the water for cooling the cylinders. And this water could not be salt; it was, it must be, fresh. Yvonnet was gulping it down.

"Quick, friend—your turn!" he said, pointing to the clear, thin stream as he rolled aside. I rushed toward the blest, life-giving liquid.

VIII.

IN THE ENGINE ROOM.

I no longer thought of the horror of our situation. I drank—drank greedily, holding the tap with one hand, as if I feared some one would take it quickly away. An infinite sense of well-being distilled itself throughout my body, like oil entering into the joints of a machine, and, with a feeling of delight, I regained possession of myself. My blood ceased coagulating, and commenced again to circulate freely, and my paralyzed tongue was restored to its flexibility, while my brain assumed its control over my various functions.

Ah! I no longer dreamed of suicide. For the moment I forgot to anticipate the future. I lived only in the present, and enjoyed only as one can enjoy who has suffered torture.

When at last I rose, I found Yvonnet standing pensively in front of the two corpses, and the dismal sight brought me back to reality. I went up to him and placed my hand on his shoulder.

"It's dreadful!" I said. "We can't leave them there like that."

"What I am afraid of," he answered, as he pointed upward, "is the return of the salt water here. Look! There it is above our heads."

He was right; and, indeed, it was strange. Through the narrow opening, the water could be seen as if separated from us by a transparent sheet of ice. How came it that the water did not fall?

If our minds at the time had been scientifically preoccupied, we should certainly have found this effect of compressed air extraordinary, notwithstanding what we knew of it already.

After thrusting back the water from the engine room, it held the liquid volume suspended above the opening, while we, plunged in this same air, and at present sufficiently accustomed to it to breathe it without embarrassment, were able to contemplate our enemy, at once powerless yet threatening, through the hole by which its egress had been made.

What now concerned us most was that it should not return. We had to shut the trapdoor immediately. The quartermaster, mounting on the lower steps of the ladder, tried to pull Niclatis' arm out of the aperture. His first effort did not succeed. The dead man was literally hanging by the wrist, which had been half crushed by the lid when the engineer had pushed it to. In order to release the hand, we should have to pull the lid open a little.

My fear was that in doing so we might cause the water to invade this compartment which we had, so to speak, conquered; and, after escaping from the effects of the oxygen and our thirst, it was not worth while being drowned like rats. My reflection reminded me that the oxygen was still gushing forth in our other room, and I hastened to turn the key and remove the risk of our being consumed by its vapors. But at the door I was met with a fresh obstacle. It was closed, and refused to open. Yvonne came, and together we tried to overcome its resistance, but our united strength was in vain. We were shut up in the engine room.

Like a vigilant jailer, the pressure of the gas we had set at liberty closed one compartment to us as soon as it had opened another. We had again changed prisons. But this time the change was advantageous, since here we had at least a temporary cessation of our thirst torment. After several more fruitless attempts, we resigned ourselves to our new situation. What had happened was that, in entering the engine room, one of us must have unconsciously closed the door behind him. And, as the oxygen continued to pour out, the pressure of air in the torpedo-tube room had soon become greater than that in the engine room, so that at present the

door remained fast without there being need of screws to hold it.

Now that my memory, aided by the discoveries made in the course of the government inquiry, enables me to reconstitute more fully the several stages of our adventure, I am tempted to give a short summary here of the series of phenomena that contributed to our deliverance. With the forces that we somewhat blindly set in action, we might have succumbed ten times over. And yet it so happened that each of our efforts, and each of the effects produced, did really tend to the object we had in view.

We had gone down into the sluice, and had shut ourselves in there in order to produce the pressure needed to open the well leading out into the sea. We obtained sixty-seven pounds per square inch, which, though formidable, had not sufficed. I know to-day that, being at a depth of thirty fathoms, we required fifteen pounds more per square inch.

Unable to support the sixty-seven pounds, we had driven it out. And where had it gone without our knowing? Into the engine room, whence it had chased the water. This water was forced back by way of the instrument room, which could only have been half filled, and into the wardroom, which the sea had not entered. Without suspecting it, we assisted this liberating operation by again opening the compressed air tap of the sluice, in order to get the oxygen that we were lacking. Yet how could we imagine the repulse of water would occur with the sea weighing on us to the extent of its seventy-five pounds per square inch?

The answer to this problem shall be given in its proper place.

From the circulation of compressed air in and out of the sluice had resulted the increase of pressure in the torpedo room, where we succeeded, after breaking the bull's-eye, in reestablishing communication between this compartment and the sluice. But this pressure would not have been enough to bring about the opening of the engine room, where a pressure of thirty-seven pounds pre-

vented the water from re-entering. Then it was I had unwittingly made the thing practicable by opening the oxygen reservoir, and for a brief space of time there was an almost equal pressure in the two compartments, so that we were able to pass from one into the other.

If we had let the favorable moment go by, we should inevitably have perished under the consuming action of the oxygen.

Next, the oxygen, continuing to escape, had shut the door behind, and fastened it, thus ceasing to invade our lungs.

In the engine room, it is true, we had to put up with thirty-seven pounds of air pressure; but the latter was of normal composition; our lungs grew accustomed to it. We could live in it, and we wanted to live.

But we could not go on living in presence of these two corpses, and I regretted that the passage toward the sluice was cut off, for we might have thrown them into the well. Here, in an air strongly impregnated with oxygen, their decomposition would be hastened.

Yvonneclimbed onto the ladder and pushed back the trapdoor a little, the task being all the more difficult as Renaut's fingers were stiffly clenched round the brass handles. When finally the lid was a trifle more open, Niclaus' arm slipped out of the aperture, and the two bodies tumbled onto the floor together, for the sailor's teeth were still in the engineer's forearm. The thud they made in falling caused me to shiver in spite of all I had gone through during the past few days.

The quartermaster was nearly carried off his balance by the suddenness of what occurred, and had to clutch the rail of the ladder. For a moment or two he stood motionless. I called to him; and there was a quiver in my voice, which increased when I noticed him trying to pull the lid gradually more and more open instead of shutting it.

Before he answered me it was quite half open, and in the space that it had occupied there was what seemed to be a slightly concave sheet of glass. This,

indeed, was water, suspended in air, so apparently contrary to nature's laws that I rushed onto the ladder with the intention of closing the trapdoor myself. And I cried to Yvonnecl at the same time:

"What are you thinking of? We shall be swamped."

"No," he replied, "we shan't. I want to see."

"See what?"

"If the lid can be pushed back entirely!"

"Why?"

"Because," answered my companion, in a low tone, "we can thrust the two comrades through the hole; it's time we had them out of the way."

Perhaps his plan was feasible. I watched the water closely, and, as it didn't budge, I nodded my head approvingly.

Yvonnecl's experiment was carried out successfully in its first part. The trapdoor was now wide open, and not a drop of water fell.

"We must get them through quick," said the Breton, descending to the bottom of the ladder.

Bending down, he took his knife, and with it pried Niclaus' teeth asunder so as to free one body from the other. I turned sick at the sight. The assistant's bloodshot eyes were open, and their ghastly stare was turned toward me.

"If they had anything to eat in their pockets, it wouldn't be amiss," observed Yvonnecl phlegmatically.

His words served to restore to me my coolness, and I helped him to search the dead men's pockets. But neither on the one nor on the other did we find the least bit of food.

From the chief engineer's pocket I took out a pocketbook, and did not put it back. My action was not dictated by curiosity. At such a moment, the contents of the pocketbook were of such little interest to me that I did not even trouble to look inside. I was influenced in what I did by the same unconscious or subconscious motive power which had acted in me previously. The pocketbook I placed in a drawer filled with tools, which was situated under the

small carpenter's bench where Renaud effected his petty repairs.

Vaguely I must have thought that I might have an opportunity of giving this souvenir to those who would care for it—to the girl he was to have married, and who, at present informed of the disaster, was weeping bitter tears. Are we to believe in presentiments, I ask again? Personally, I do not believe in them; and yet, under circumstances like those of Yvonne and myself, one's mentality changes.

In the engineer's pockets were also a packet of tobacco, a briar pipe, some cigarette papers reduced to pulp by the sea water, a very fine knife bearing a name on it—Germaine—no doubt that of the betrothed. His watch had stopped at sixteen minutes past eleven, proving that it had continued to go for two hours, though surrounded by water; and, hanging to his steel chain, I remarked a fairly large mariner's compass, with two movable, vertical glass faces, like those used in rapid surveying.

While I was engaged in this lugubrious inventory, Yvonne raised Nicalus in his arms, and painfully bore him to the top of the ladder. Fortunately the body was perfectly rigid, and therefore lent itself easily to the experiment. I now seized the legs of the corpse to help my companion, yet anxiously wondering what would occur. Nicalus' head at length touched the liquid vault and passed into it, though with some difficulty. We pushed, and it seemed as though we were thrusting the body into a thick, viscous liquid. Gradually the trunk and legs disappeared also, but we, at the same time, were deluged with water.

At once we paused, tempted to loose our burden. What if the operation should result in the reflooding of the engine room? Yet, no, the compressed air was there, opposing itself, better than any metal stopper, to the return of the water. This latter, however, being incompressible, the solid volume we were introducing into it could only find room by displacing an equal volume of the liquid, which necessarily fell into our compartment, and onto our heads.

The price was not too dear, since it delivered us from the necessity of living with two decaying bodies.

At length we managed to finish our task. After Nicalus, we thrust Renaud through the aperture. The trap was closed again, and the screws were tightened so as to make further danger on this score impossible.

The water which had fallen into the engine room gathered on the side opposite the door; and I noticed from this circumstance that the inclination of the boat had increased.

"We are rising aft," I said to Yvonne.

"Then, if we are," he replied, "why shouldn't the boat rise up to the surface?"

I had some difficulty in making him understand that, though we had got rid of the water from the engine room, there must be the same quantity in the boat.

"But why should the boat go up on our side?" he insisted.

"Because there is less where we are. What we have lost has simply been displaced without leaving the boat."

"Then we have, perhaps, drowned the comrade who was knocking yesterday at the other end. We don't hear him now."

I was dumfounded by the justness of this hypothesis which had not occurred to my mind. Yvonne might be right, and the unfortunate fellow was, perhaps, calling because of the water which he saw invading his compartment.

"We must repeat the same signal," I said.

"It's just what I was going to propose, friend," he replied.

But in vain we struck at regular intervals, for a long time, one, two, three blows on the side plates and bulkhead separating us from the neighboring compartment, which was the repairing shop, Yvonne told me. In vain we listened with straining ear. There was no reply. It seemed really that we were the sole survivors of the *Dragon Fly*.

"If he is alone, he has perhaps gone to sleep," suggested my companion.

And he added, as though speaking to himself :

"It must be terrible to be alone."

I was thinking just then the same thing. In this distress, I esteemed myself fortunate to have such a companion. I looked at him, and recalled the day when I had seen him for the first time at Tunis, in the Grand Hotel, while Jacques was offering him a glass of wine. On that occasion, he was spruce, fresh, and rosy, with well-combed beard. To-day he appeared ten years older, with gaunt features, hollow eyes, and bristly, shaggy beard. What must I look like myself? In a few days more, at the same rate, we should have the aspect of ghosts.

"What are we going to do, friend?" he asked.

I did not know what answer to make. What could we yet attempt or hope for? Yet to give up, after the manifest good fortune we had had so far—due to the protection of Our Lady of Auray, said Yvonne, with conviction—would be risking a return of frenzy. While we still preserved some physical energy, it would be wise to examine the place we were in, where tools existed in plenty. Here was a drawerful of them—hammers, pincers, chisels, files of all kinds, screws and nails, with numerous spare nuts and bolts. And there were, besides, four strong bits, fitting, no doubt, into a brace. Where was the brace?

Yvonne discovered it under the bench. By taking turns, we should be able with these bits and the brace to pierce sheets of iron of from a quarter to one-third of an inch thick. And I reflected that if the oxygen ceased coming to us from the pipe communicating with the Jaubert apparatus, we could bore a hole through the separating wall and receive, as we wanted it, a supply of the vivifying gas in our old compartment.

Then here was a can of lubricating oil.

"That should feed us," said Yvonne at once.

He was right. In any case, the oil would be more nourishing than water, and, as containing a considerable por-

tion of carbon, was a windfall worth having.

"Heavens, how hungry I am!" exclaimed the quartermaster.

And, after casting a questioning glance at me, he took a pull at the can. It contained a thick, blackish oil used by automobilists for greasing cylinders. I made a wry face, in spite of myself, when drinking my share, and hastened to wash my mouth out at the emptying tap, whither Yvonne had already preceded me.

"Heavens, how hungry I am!" repeated my companion as he paused in his operations.

"We must economize our water, Yvonne."

"Oh, there are nearly eighteen gallons in there, friend. We put in a full supply at Bizerta."

"Yes, but the engine drew on it between Bizerta and Tunis; and then there must have been a good deal of evaporation."

"When the reservoir here is empty," he replied, "you have only to open the tap there for water to arrive from the magazine. So we shan't be left without."

"Undeceive yourself, Yvonne. Though you were to open the tap now, no water would come."

"Why?"

"Because of the pressure. The density we have in this compartment would prevent the water coming."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite. And, moreover, if now you were to turn the tap you have pointed to, all the water in our reservoir might be forced back into the magazine."

"Always the pressure!" murmured the Breton. "Since one has to count with so many things—it would be better—"

But he suddenly stopped what he was going to say, and, dropping on all fours, disappeared under the frame of the engine.

"Why, what have you got there?"

"Oho! Well, I never!"

"What is it? Tell me."

And, anxious, I stooped down just as Yvonne dragged out a sort of shapeless

mass that, for a moment, I hardly recognized.

"Phanor!" cried the quartermaster, raising the mass into the air.

And I saw that it was Jacques' poodle, with its lion's mane, and hair on only half its body, its back quarters carefully shaved, and its tail terminating in a bushy tuft.

"Here is something to eat, friend!" said the finder, rising to his feet, with eager eyes; and he repeated the words "to eat" while I drank again. The expression reminded me only too well that neither water nor oil was sufficient to quench hunger. My stomach was lamentably empty.

"Poor Phanor!" said Yvonnet, drawing out his knife and sitting down on the one stool of the engine room. "It was his favorite nook between the two uprights. He took refuge there to keep out of the way, knowing his master would have sent him ashore. When ensconced there, he fancied nobody noticed him; but his tail tuft always betrayed him."

While talking to himself, the Breton was eviscerating the poor animal. Afterward he proceeded to skin it, with a celerity denoting practice.

"I once took duty for the cook for three months," he explained. "I will try to dress him up and make him eatable."

"But to cook the dog," I replied, "you want fire; and where can you get any?"

"Oh, you shall see!"

Once more I reflected how extremely lucky we were. This dog had embarked against its master's wishes. Here its body at a critical moment was about to furnish us with a meal. The service rendered us was a great one. For, at this juncture, the degree of starvation at which I had arrived was such that I was ready to devour anything.

When the dog was skinned and trussed, we found that there was not very much to eat—no more than could be got off a big hare. Still, we might hope to hold out two or three days longer with what there was. And if by then no call came at the telephone,

we should be practically at the end of our tether. While I was making these reflections, my companion had been exploring Renaut's bench, and had brought thence a soldering lamp.

"See," he said. "We can get a fire—it is filled with spirit."

"Fortunately."

"And, if it had been empty, we could have fetched some out of the engine."

Yvonnet showed me the large brass reservoir fixed onto the two uprights.

"So you know all about the motor, Yvonnet?" I remarked.

"No; not about this one, friend. About steam engines, yes. But these explosion motors are new to me."

"Yet you have your torpedo man's certificate."

"Yes. I am intrusted with the putting together and taking to pieces as well as the upkeep of the torpedoes. I also have to do with the dynamo and the network of electric wires. But the engine is not in my department. I only know that this motor works by means of spirits of wine, because the head man used to say that it was a good thing alcohol had replaced the methylated spirit, since the vine growers of the South would be benefited."

Before Yvonnet had finished speaking, my mind had begun to conceive a plan, first vaguely, and then in clearer detail. For several years I had been accustomed to a motor car driven by methylated spirit. All explosion motors resembling each other, this one I had before me could only, if driven by alcohol, differ in its carburetor. I remembered all the essential parts, which I had often handled, being myself the chauffeur.

The twelve big cylinders of the engine here facing each other all had their explosion chambers and their lighting wicks, and the valves were all commanded. Here were the magnetos and there the wheel. I looked about for the handle setting the engine going. If only I could start the engine! Why not? The peculiarity of the explosion motor in a submarine was its being able to act in a closed chamber; and this one could act as regularly at the bottom of the

sea, and at any depth, as when under the guidance of the engineer. It could even have gone on working in the compartment filled with water. Its stoppage was not due to a deterioration of the other parts of the engine, since there they all were in front of me. What had caused the standstill was the engineer's will, or, rather, that of the commander, who, up in his conning tower, could stop or set going his motor instantaneously. Jacques had either stopped the engine himself or ordered the engineer to stop it. If I succeeded in starting the engine again, and in making the screw turn, what would happen to the *Dragon Fly*?

This was a perplexing question. And, while I was debating it, a flame flashed from the end of the tube belonging to the soldering lamp. Yvonnec pointed his finger to it triumphantly.

On the metal bench, freed from its tools, he arranged in a line the eight pieces of meat supplied by the unfortunate Phanor's carcass, and now representing the sum total of our provisions. They had no very inviting color, but, to men as hungry as we were, they seemed more appetizing than the primest pieces of a fat ox.

Holding his lamp at a suitable distance, the quartermaster directed its blue flame on the pieces in turn; the meat crackled, and the darker portions gradually assumed a tone uniform with the rest of the roast. By this means our supply was preserved from decomposition. Two of the pieces were thoroughly cooked. They were to be our meat for the day.

At last I asked Yvonnec to cease. The lamp's flame alone consumed more of our oxygen than we two together. It was of no use to risk a deficiency before having the time to pierce a hole in the partition.

We ate heartily. Never had a meal tasted better, never had I had a beef-steak cooked to a greater nicety. If we had obeyed our appetite, we should have eaten a second and a third portion; but the nine pounds of meat yielded by Phanor must last us four days, at least. It was a pound ration a day, but with-

out bread or vegetables, and also without salt, a lack we felt keenly.

Yet our enjoyment after fasting compensated for everything. Indeed, our strength, hitherto kept up by nervous effort, was at breaking point, and without food would have been incapable of further manifestation. For the moment, even I was overcome by the eating and drinking; and, lying down, I abandoned myself to sleep. I did just remember, before dozing off, to wind up my watch. It indicated a quarter past two, but whether morning or evening I could not say. We must be at the commencement of our fifth day.

I faintly saw the quartermaster, with his tall stature, turn off the two lamps. I had a buzzing in my ears. Still, I had grown quickly accustomed to the compressed air. Soon I reached the land of dreams, and found myself rushing along in a monster motor car at the bottom of the sea, leaping over seaweed, madrepores, and coral.

IX.

IN DIVER'S DRESS.

When I awoke, my head was heavy and my temples were swollen. My ears tingled and buzzed, and I ached all over. My watch indicated five minutes past three. I had slept more than twelve hours.

Yvonnec had been up some time. He had lighted one of the lamps, and, on opening my eyes, I saw him bent over me with anxious face. The expression of his features drew me at once from the semitorpor in which I lingered through fear of too quickly having to face reality.

"What's the matter, Yvonnec? Bad news again?"

"No, friend," he answered; "but I was afraid you weren't going to wake. I was nigh shaking you. Yet it's so nice to sleep, and not to think—you would have been angry."

"Angry, no. I had a nightmare, as on the first day."

"That's funny. My dreams are all pleasant. I wish I could dream all the

time. I dreamed about Annaïc again. I saw her at our 'Pardon.' 'Twas there we got to know each other. I danced with her there for the first time."

He stopped, then said in an altered tone:

"That's all finished."

I noticed a big tear run down his weather-beaten cheek and lose itself in his beard.

A Breton "Pardon!" The word called up before me a peaceful vision. More than once in the country of the golden broom I had seen the Armorican women, with coifs like white sea-gull's wings, and the sturdy Breton lads, with their round hats and embroidered vests; the little children, with their virgin voices and garlands of cornflowers. Yvonne's tear recalled their long processions winding through the sunlit champaign, among the hawthorn bushes, and kneeling in the crossroads before the granite Madonnas.

While these dreams brought to my companion in our tomb the echo of ancestral resignations, I, during those twelve hours, had been borne in fantastic course by a motor car whose cylinders, as large as ancient mortars, resounded with explosions like those of a storm, under the action of sparks as long as flashes of lightning.

In front, a huge octopus, clinging and twining round the hood of the motor, waved its tentacles amid the living blooms of a submarine forest, and belched forth a black miasma which darkened afar the crystal waters. This fiery dragon, which I had driven through the Mediterranean plains with my hands clutching a wheel as large as that of a ship for steering, drew our *Dragon Fly* in its wake.

Turning round, scared, I had seen the submarine bound over the wrecks of modern ships and antique triremes, and I had still before my eyes the phosphorescent furrow hollowed out in the sand by its heavy, unwieldy fore part, in which was a gaping rent.

Was it another presentiment? No, but rather association of ideas, for I had gone to sleep thinking: "Could I only set the engine in movement!"

'And my imagination running away with me, under the stimulus of my feverishness, had converted the thought into a nightmare, so that it might recur to me on reawaking.

As a matter of fact, my first impulse was to seek the means to turn the handle. The instrument required was evidently not a fixture, as in the motor car, but must be somewhere hanging within the engineer's reach. Finding it nowhere, I examined the magneto, hoping to discover there a special arrangement answering the same purpose. While engaged in my search, Yvonne called me.

"Look here, friend," he said, "I have been continuing the inventory. Just see what I have come upon."

Leading me to a corner, he showed me a strong box that he had opened, and the course of my ideas was at once changed by what I perceived inside—a diver's dress.

"There is the whole apparatus," went on my companion, "and nearly five fathoms of tubing into the bargain."

He was right. The dress was complete, from the helmet that seemed to belong to some warrior of ancient times, to the lead-weighted shoes that served to keep the diver in a vertical position. The brass helmet, of aneroid form, was scooped out in the lower part so as to fit onto the shoulders and act as a breastplate on the diver's chest; and three apertures, one circular in front for the eyes, and two elliptic at the sides, were provided with thick panes of glass. At the back, another opening projected, with a thread on the outer edge, to which Yvonne had already screwed the end of the gutta-percha tube supplying air to the diver. What use did he hope we could make of this apparatus?

The remainder of the equipment consisted of a garment all in one piece, of coarse canvas, lined and coated thick with gutta-percha. To strengthen it, there was a leathern belt provided with a dagger in a brass sheath, which allowed the diver to cut through any obstacle met with in the water, and attached to the belt was a ring with a

cord, which connected the man below with those on the surface of the water.

Yvonnec had let me examine all these details without a word. At last he said:

"Well, my friend, what are we going to do with it?"

"That's all right," I remarked, dropping the heavy shoes which I had just lifted. "Unfortunately the apparatus is of no use to us here."

"And yet—"

I interrupted him with:

"Since we can't get into the well."

"Yes, but—"

"And even if we could, it wouldn't open."

"I know, yet—"

"And even if it would open, we could do nothing with five fathoms of tubing."

"I don't mean that—"

I was certainly in a humor for interrupting, for again I did not let him finish his sentence.

"And even if we had five miles," I said, "we shouldn't be able to find our way about."

Yvonnec gently shook his head, waited an instant, and then, crossing his arms, replied:

"You can object as much as you like, friend; but, all the same, we might walk about inside."

"Inside?"

"Yes. Why shouldn't we visit the water-logged compartments?"

For a moment I was confounded in presence of this proposal, which, however, was reasonable enough. Yvonnec continued:

"Look here, friend. The comrade who has ceased knocking is perhaps not dead. If we could get to him."

I reflected, and he added:

"And if we could reach the tubes of compressed air?"

"Well!"

"Well; I heard that there was compressed air in the magazines, air up to one thousand five hundred pounds. This force would be sufficient to drive the water out of the boat, even if we were down in a depth of thirty fathoms."

"Yes, but the hull would not be able to stand the attempt, Yvonnec, even granting we had the means to direct the air in the right directions."

"Then how is it the hull is able to resist, where we are, the pressure of the sea?"

"Because of its convex form. If we were to bring a still greater pressure to bear on the inside, all the plates would be dislocated."

My companion did not reply to this. His mind was at work on something else. On my side, since I did not believe in the possibility of using the compressed air to drive the water out of the boat, I disapproved of the project of trying to get provisions out of the magazine. But the idea of putting on the diving dress and entering the water-filled compartments led me to think of another thing.

"Perhaps we might succeed, Yvonnec, in finding the safety leads now."

"Ah, if we could only cast them off!" he answered. "But how?"

"By the switch the commander should have employed."

"Yes, but you need to know the working of it."

"I do."

"You do, friend?"

"Yes. Jacques showed me how to work the switch in his conning tower. It's very simple."

"Then what has to be done is to get inside the conning tower. But is it open, do you think?"

"It must be. If the door had been closed, the commander would have been alive, and would have called us through the telephone. Since no signal has come to us from him, he must have been drowned, and his conning tower must be open to the instrument room below, to which we have access."

Yvonnec nodded his head approvingly.

"Anyway, you will have to look for the switch. Are you sure you can put your hand on it?"

"Yes. It is on the left side of the conning tower, on the small, mahogany table that stands in the narrow part. There are several switches round a cen-

tral one. This last is to cast off all the leads together, the others to cast off some few at a time."

"Then you would have to press on the central knob."

"Of course."

"If only there were a light in the room!"

"Even without a light, I believe I can find the right place by groping."

"It's not so easy. There are all sorts of handles, levers, and switches on the commander's table."

"That's true; but I remember that the knobs communicating with the safety leads are covered with a vulcanite cap to prevent any one of them being touched by accident."

Yvonnec remained silent for a moment; then, taking my hand, he said to me gravely:

"Until now, friend, I have never thought we should be able to escape by our own efforts."

"Then all we have done up to the present—our experiment in the well?"

"I had no faith in it. I was convinced we were too deep down."

"How did you know that?"

"When the accident happened, the boat plunged headforemost. You recollect, the torpedo tube was as straight up as a chimney. Well, we took at least half a minute to get to the bottom, and in half a minute you can sink a good distance going down vertically. That struck me. I didn't say anything to you in the well, for I didn't want to discourage you; but I was practically sure the lid of the well wouldn't come off."

"And now you have hope?"

"A good deal. I remember seeing the *Ruby* in the basin, with its safety leads attached. It takes a lot of water to balance such a weight. If only you can cast off ours, we shall go up like a cork."

"All depends on the number of compartments to the fore which are filled with water."

"This time, friend, I have good hope."

"Then, quick! Help me to put on the dress."

Yvonnec's cheerfulness had taken possession of me, and I was all eagerness. If I reached the conning tower I should find the switch, I felt convinced. With feverish haste, I hurried my companion at his task; and he, bending over the dress, examined all its parts to assure himself that it was water-tight. He showed me the two taps in the back of the helmet, which served for the pumping of air from outside. I should have no need of them, since I should get air through the tube.

"Do you think you can strike the opening of the conning tower?" he questioned anxiously.

"Yes. It is at the top of the ladder."

"But the ladder?"

"The ladder is almost vertical, isn't it, and stands in one corner of the instrument room?"

"Yes. In the corner here."

And he showed me the side opposite to the back. Again, with an anxious voice, he said:

"Look here, friend. It's I that ought to go up there. I know the place best. There's only the switch commanding the safety leads I don't quite locate; but with your explanation—"

"No, no," I answered. "I mean to go myself. I am sure of finding the way. Don't let us lose any more time."

"But you might faint, friend," urged Yvonnec, once again trying to dissuade me, "and I couldn't come to you. Have something to eat before starting. What a pity we haven't a little rum!"

While speaking, he had lit his lamp, and proceeded, as the evening before, to prepare our substitute for beefsteak. The one he served me with was double the size of his own. I noticed that the flame of the lamp was not so long as on the previous occasion. The oxygen in our compartment had diminished; we should have to be careful. But there was no immediate cause for uneasiness, as we still breathed quite easily. When I came back, it would be time to see to the matter.

The meat was nicely cooked, and I had to exercise a strong self-control not

to be greedy and swallow my portion at once. I seemed to feel the *Dragon Fly* quivering and ready to quit the depths of the sea for the upper air.

My toilet was long. Yvonnee lingered over it, scrutinizing the joinings of the trousers to the breast covering, loosening and tightening again each of the screws that insured the hermetic closure, and seeing that the large gutta-percha bracelets round my wrists and ankles did not let any water through. At last he said:

"When you enter the instrument room, friend, you must stay for a minute by the aperture, to get your lungs accustomed to the air inside the dress. Then you will move your limbs and make sure that no water is getting inside. If anything goes wrong, you'll only have to slip through the trap, and I shall be here to receive you."

He put the signal cord into the ring on the belt.

"Three tugs at the cord will tell me you are in the conning tower, and that you are breathing all right?"

"Agreed."

"And if anything should happen that you don't breathe as easily, you must pull several times sharply."

"But what could you do in that case, my poor Yvonnee?"

"I don't know; but I could come to meet you. I can hold my breath a long time, and, with the cord to help me, I could fetch you back."

When all his recommendations had been given, Yvonnee climbed the ladder, unscrewed the nuts of the trapdoor, drew the latter open, and—a bucketful of water soused him. He shut the trap quickly, but the water spurted through the crevices. What had happened? Simply this, that, having absorbed oxygen, we had exhaled carbonic acid, and the pressure having decreased in the engine room, we were informed of the fact by this descent of a certain quantity of water from the compartment above. And now I reflected that our cooking lamp was the great culprit. It had absorbed a great deal of the oxygen, which had not been replaced. We

must borrow some from the neighboring compartment.

We looked for the tube of the oxylith apparatus feeding the engine. It was in the corner on the left side of the door. At my suggestion, Yvonnee lighted a match in front of the orifice formed like the rose of a watering can, flat and pierced with three small holes. The match burned with a small, short, meager flame. If the oxygen had been coming into the room, we should have seen, on the contrary, the combustion grow stronger and the flame brighter. Consequently, the apparatus did not act. Later I discovered the reason. The second reservoir was regulated so as to supply oxygen under a pressure slightly superior to the normal. This oxygen could not enter our compartment, where it met with a much superior pressure.

Deferring my expedition, therefore, we had to seek the precious gas, not now from the apparatus, but from the compartment we had quitted with the gas escaping there. Armed with a bit and brace, my companion, after freeing me from my helmet, attacked the partition near the door. The work was harder than we had thought. Not until a good hour had gone by did we succeed, relieving each other, in boring a hole, rather larger, indeed, than was required, through which the gas at once made its presence felt. Another hour passed, during which we allowed the gas to enter; then Yvonnee renewed his experiment with the trapdoor.

This time no water fell. The equilibrium was reestablished, and, by means of a big nail driven into the hole, the quartermaster stopped farther ingress of the oxygen. I was enervated by the delay. Again Yvonnee put my helmet on me, examined the dress, turned me round and round, and finally pronounced I was all right.

The dress weighed me down. I found all movement tiring, and, on reaching the third rung of the ladder, was compelled to pause an instant, with the perspiration pouring off my forehead. The leaden soles seemed to be dragging me backward. I realized at

present to what extent I had been weakened by my five days' privations. I sat down on a step and called to Yvonnec to rid me of this useless weight, for, once in the water, I should know how to maintain a vertical position by the aid of what I might meet with in my progress. To my surprise, I saw Yvonnec go farther away and pick up the end of the gutta-percha tube which he had unrolled beforehand, drawing it out to the opposite extremity of the engine room. He placed the tube to his mouth, and spoke to me, and I heard him as distinctly as if he had been speaking in my ear.

"We have a real telephone in this tube, friend. I had not thought of it at first. What is it you were saying?"

I repeated my request, and the Breton came and took off the leather straps binding these novel buskins to my feet. I then continued my climb. The top of my helmet knocked against the liquid vault. My situation was a queer one. It was the first time a diver had entered the water headforemost, and certainly the first time he had climbed up to enter. Everything in this boat was upside down, on account of the extraordinary intervention of the compressed air.

I experienced some difficulty in forcing my way into the liquid mass. It was as though I were pushing into jelly. I felt the water run over my hands and feet, the only portions of my body which were bare. There was again a fall of a volume of water equal to that of my body which displaced it. My feet at length reached the trap. I stepped inside, and now I was entirely immersed. But here I was, seized with a further attack of intense fatigue, and I stopped for a moment close to the trapdoor, staggering like a drunken man, and incapable of advancing.

"Are you all right, friend?"

Yvonnec's voice gave me fresh nerve, and the thought that it would accompany me throughout my exploration cheered me to go on.

"Speak to me often, friend," the voice added. "I shall be less anxious. What do you see?"

"I see nothing yet but the trapdoor,"

I answered. "The rest is all dark, quite dark. I want to get accustomed to the change."

"Don't hurry," came the reply. "You will soon get used to the water."

I was about to say something back, but my hand, as I groped about, touched an object of peculiar shape. I ran my fingers along it, and suddenly started with an energy I had not deemed myself capable of showing. Without suspecting anything, I had sat down on one of the corpses we had put away in this compartment the day before. The impression was a disagreeable one, and it needed all my will power to overcome my disinclination to continue my journey. At last I started forward once more, telling myself that, if I could reach the upper room, and could find the switch, everything would go well. In my haste now, I knocked against the instrument table, but the shock was insignificant, since I felt myself quite light in the heavier medium.

I had lost in weight a number of pounds equal in volume to the water I had displaced. And this volume was considerable, owing to the helmet, the gutta-percha dress, and the air they contained. I scarcely touched the floor. I floated, rather. By merely pressing my foot against the floor, I rose up to the ceiling, and began to understand the utility and necessity even of the leaden soles I had just taken off. Had I had them then, they would have made it easier for me to keep my balance, which I found compromised at each moment.

I clung to the table, and there my hand came upon an instrument which I recognized on account of its peculiar shape. It was the gyroscope, which served instead of the compass by the invariability of its plane of rotation. Then a sort of lint tore to bits in my fingers, and I guessed it was the hydrographic chart on which I had read the depth figures.

"Well, friend, you don't speak. Say something to me."

I tried to answer the good fellow. He would have played this rôle better than I, being less nervous.

"My eyes are becoming accustomed to the obscurity," I said. "I can see a little. I have found the staircase."

There it was, indeed. Its polished brass rail cast a gleam that guided me, and now I could vaguely make out on the wall along which I groped switchboards for distributing the electricity, together with levers, galvanometers, and other instruments that had given their name to this compartment, presided over by the second engineer.

I put my hand on an electric bulb. It was broken. We were lucky enough to have in the engine room bulbs of thick glass capable of resisting the pressure of the water. The darkness in which I was plunged caused me to appreciate our good fortune in that respect.

On reaching the staircase, I stumbled against a body extended on the floor. I stooped and touched a cloth garment, then a face. There was no beard, but a slight mustache, and short hair. It must be the third lieutenant.

A word from Yvonne encouraged me to go on. I told him of what I had just discovered. Then I stepped over the corpse, and began to climb the staircase. It was steeper than the one leading down into the engine room, being more properly a ladder. But I mounted it quite easily, the only difficulty being in avoiding a somersault. I tried the ceiling with my hand. The trap was not closed. I could enter the conning tower.

There the obscurity was absolute. As the two trapdoors were not exactly over each other, the rays of light from the engine room were not able to penetrate. The lighted trap appeared like a flattened moon, with an opal, far-off gleam. The rays, entering the water through its circular aperture, formed a phosphorescent cone, the base of which lost itself in the shadow, and the whole of which was shaken at each of my movements. In the turret, where I now stood, it seemed as though I were surrounded by ink.

I waited a moment to remark whether my eyes would grow accustomed also to the darkness here. But there was

no change. Not a glimmer arrived. A fossil buried for centuries in a block of marble could not be overwhelmed by a thicker night. And I said to myself that Jacques was in this narrow space where two men had difficulty in moving about. He must be here, for he had left me to go up to the conning tower. I still heard his last words:

"We will meet up there when you have seen enough down below."

Here, in fact, we were meeting again. Amid my most fantastic imaginings, I could scarcely have invented this tragic scene, my return to this rendezvous, this lugubrious tête-à-tête between a dead man and one whom death threatened. Yet the threat was not now so dreadful, since I was close to the switch which, by releasing the safety leads, could restore me to the upper air. So once again, with all the force of my will, I struggled against my weakness and emotion. I tottered, although the weight of my body was scarcely appreciable. My nerves alone supported me, but they would support me to the end.

"Take care, friend. I have only two yards of tubing left. You must have caught it against something."

This warning from Yvonne restored me all my lucidity by showing me the danger that might result from any sharp or careless movement. I had no doubt gone round the instrument table, but was too near my goal to turn back and remedy the mistake. I tried to make out my position. The turret narrowed toward the fore part, and the aperture through which I had entered was against the vertical bulkhead terminated by the cap. Against the bulkhead were the rounds of the ladder leading up to the cap, which was not much more than a yard above my head. I could reach and touch it if I wished; and I did wish, for in my brain, weakened by all my bumpings against obstacles, there was the irresistible impulse to settle the foolish question: Was it closed?

The question was foolish, because, had it been open, had Jacques, at the moment of the accident, been able to

open it and escape with the bubbles of air rising to the surface, as happened to the commander of the *Farfadet*, in the Lake of Bizerta, the machinery would be at present full of water, since the formidable pressure of the sea would have weighed down and prevented our compressed air from chasing the water into the neighboring compartment. But there are moments when one only reasons with the absurd by practical experiment.

I mounted the steps with precaution. I raised my arm, touched the cap, seized the heavy handles that were screwed tight. It was closed, firmly closed. But what was this? My right hand, with which I had made the experiment, was no longer in the water. It bathed in air. I could not be mistaken. The change of sensation was too great. The phenomenon was simple enough; and, if I had not been in such an exhausted state, I should have immediately understood what had happened. The water had invaded the chamber from underneath, since it communicated only with the instrument room. The air had consequently gathered at the summit of the chamber, and I had just thrust my hand into it.

Then a dreadful vision rose before me. For Jacques had been able to live in this imprisoned air. But not for long, perhaps a few hours, during

which time he had clung to the bars of the ladder, with the water up to his waist, struggling until the lack of oxygen completed his exhaustion. In the dark, sinister night, what a death must his have been!

Whereas I, a few yards lower down, at the same moment, was clamoring, and crying! I had space in which to give vent to my frenzy! I had light! I had a companion in misfortune! The water was not there—an opened grave waiting to receive me!

While these thoughts chased each other confusedly in my brain, I had forgotten the object of my expedition. I stopped, stretched out my arm, advanced a little, groping. The body was not on the floor. In rising, I touched a leathern garment. I ran my fingers along it—and met with a face, a short, thick beard. It was he! He was lying on his controlling switchboard. He had died at the post of honor. At this instant Yvonne's voice called me:

"I am getting anxious. The tubing is paid out. Don't advance any farther. Where are you?"

"Wait, Yvonne! I am praying for him," was my reply.

It was true. An irresistible force had bowed me in presence of my friend's corpse. I threw my arms round the body, and within my dark helmet prayers and sobs mingled.

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE, ON SALE APRIL 7TH.



COTTERILL LEAVES OFF A GARMENT

WHEN Charles A. Cotterill was making an automobile tour in northeastern Ohio not long ago with a member of Congress, the machine got stuck in the mud, and the party invaded a farmer's house with a request for dinner.

"I don't know you," said the congressman to the farmer, "and you don't know me, but you elected me to Congress, and now I want you to give us a dinner."

The farmer and his wife furnished an elaborate meal, and it was when the repast was half over that the countryman, with a worried look, exclaimed to his wife:

"Mommie, you didn't give Mr. Cotterill a napkin."

"Oh, yes," said Cotterill quickly, "here it is," and he took it out of his lap and held it up for all to see.

"Oh!" apologized the farmer, "I thought you didn't have none because you didn't have it on."

The Way of the North

By Hulbert Footner

Author of "Not to the Swiftest," "Bosom Adversaries," Etc.

Told by a freighter on the Pea-vine Prairie. The way of a woman in the untamed North. The freighter's philosophy and it applies to every daughter of Eve, without distinction of race or color—was: "Take women as they come, and treat 'em right, and the proportion of good and bad is about the same." His yarn will interest you.

ON a breathless night in October, with every star, great and small, hanging out a separate signal aloft, three men were reclining by a fire on Pea-vine Prairie. The fuel was dry poplar, burning swiftly and softly, the flames mounting straight, and flinging up a geyser of sparks. Off to the northwest, where a silvery light lingered in the sky, the smoke of hours past could be seen still haunting the neighborhood, floating motionless in diaphanous veils a sapling's height above the grass. On the other side of the fire, a laden box wagon and a buckboard stood tongue to tongue in the grass; the horses had finished their first feed, and an occasional drowsy tap of a bell out of the void of darkness beyond was the only reminder of their proximity.

Two of the men had arrived from the West in the buckboard. Meeting the freighter at this point, with the easy fellowship of the trail they had camped in company. The two had been "looking over the land" with a view to immigrating; and the freighter, who had the nonchalant air of long familiarity with these trails, was good-naturedly letting the strangers tell him about his own country.

The principal speaker was a young man with a luxuriant, aggressive mustache, and a hot, brown eye. He was

abusing the "niggers." He had no especial grievance against the natives, but it seemed to bolster him in his own esteem to rail. In particular, the mixed marriages he had observed excited his scorn. This is a delicate subject in the North, and the freighter became a little restive as he listened, though his expression remained polite.

"None of them brown girls'll ever get her hooks into *me*, sir," the traveler was saying. "Beaver or Cree, full blood or breed, they're all alike, and the damnation of a man! Every one of 'em plays for a white husband, 'cause she thinks they don't like to wield a stick on a woman. But that's what they need.

"There's Mert Heywood," he went on. "We spelled at his place for a week to help with the threshing. Mert has fifteen good cows, and there was condensed milk on the table 'cause the squaw won't milk. And, by gad, sir, when we come in from the field at noon, we had to turn in and cook the dinner 'cause the woman was off in the tepees somewhere!"

"Then there's that fellow down at the foot of the lake—Dick Foster I think they call him. It's took him a different way. He's as furtive like and wall-eyed as a redskin himself. He won't have nothin' to do with his own race no more!"

The freighter was shaving his plug

ruminatively. He was a tall, rawboned young man, with a shock of intractable red hair. As he bent over to start his pipe with a coal, the fire illuminated an instantly likable face, informed by good sense and good humor. He had the eyes of a friendly soul, whom no fool would yet be likely to presume upon.

"I know the Heywood and the Foster outfits well," he at length interrupted. His voice was mild, but it silenced the other. "I've also seen plenty of outfits outside with a white woman runnin' them and no better off. Why blame the women at all? Mert Heywood's a good fellow, but everybody knows he's as slack as punkwood—I have told him to his face. As for Dick Foster, he always had a strain of the savage in him. He took to tepees as natural as a duck to the sloughs."

"Then you're all for these mixed marriages?" suggested the stranger sarcastically.

"Not at all," said the freighter quietly. "I wouldn't lay down no rule either way. It's a question for every man to put to himself when his time comes. My point is just this: Take women as they come and treat 'em right, and the proportion of good and bad is about the same."

"I've yet to meet a good one that had any red in her," said the stranger.

"So?" said the young freighter. "Well, I knew a fellow met with a good one once. Like to hear the yarn?"

"Sure!" they said.

The freighter flung his sheepskin coat over his shoulders to keep his back warm. He braced himself against his roll of blankets and extended his stocking-toed toes to the warmth. The inexhaustible fountain of bright sparks held his reminiscent eyes, and he told his story to the fire.

"His name was Jim Rennick," he began. "He come into the country about five years ago, expectin', like many another young sprig, to pick gold pieces off the bushes like berries, I guess. And he found, like the rest of them, that it required good hard scratchin' instead. And after grousin' around a while, like they mostly do, and cursin' all and sun-

dry, he went to it like everybody else, and found it weren't such a bad life, after all.

"The girl's name was Beulah. She was the daughter of old Dave Kidd, the white man who kept the first little trading store at the foot of the lake years ago. He was a square old head, they say, and aimed to bring up his children white; but when Beulah was eight years old he up and took the pneumonia, and snuffed out in three days. His squaw brought the kids back to the tepees of her own folks across the river.

"In two years, the widow had married Ancose Mackay, a breed from down the river. She went out to the Landing to live, and left her kids behind to be kicked from one tepee to another, and fed the last when grub was scarce. Especially Beulah, because she couldn't forget all the white ways she was brought up in.

"Beulah happened to be pretty. Already, when she was fourteen years old, the fellows up and down the lake were talking about it. I may say she was damn pretty; and a man didn't have to exercise his imagination to see it. Her skin wasn't no darker than rich cream, with pink cheeks and brown eyes that always had something surprised and painful like in them, though she didn't mean it that way. But I ain't no hand at a description. Say, she was prettier than that. Why, when Jim Rennick first took notice of her, she was as delicate and ladylike as one of them crocus flowers that comes up through the snow. She was sixteen at the time.

"It happened this way: Jim was walkin' around the south side of the lake, and he made Wall-eye Macgregor's tepee for the noon spell. Wall-eye was her uncle. There was nothin' white about the old blackguard but the name he claimed. The girl was in the tepee, and there was another white man there. I won't name him to you. He's well known in the country, but this story ain't never got about on him. Great, big man. The girl was cryin' quiet like, and it come out that this other fellow had offered old Wall-eye a sum down in cash for her, which Wall-eye had accepted,

and the fellow was goin' to carry her up the lake afterward in his Peterboro. There are funny things happens in an unsettled country; but I never run into such a raw deal as this before.

"You understand, this ain't no love story. Jim didn't feel no particular call to the girl then; she was too young. But it made him feel like hell to see the big tears chasin' down the kid's face, and her not sayin' a word; and that big, fat— Well, he invited the other fellow outside, and, without gettin' excited at all, he told him what he thought of the deal. When the other fellow laughed sneery like, Jim, he stretched him flat before all the natives, and carried him down to the water and threw him in his own Peterboro.

"When Jim was gettin' in himself, the girl caught holt of him. Say, her eyes were bright and her cheeks all red—but Jim couldn't face her. She wanted to thank him and didn't know how; and he didn't want to be thanked, and didn't know how to get away. It was an embarrassin' moment. At last she said:

"'You ver' good man. I never, never forget!'

"Just about then Jim was wishin' the ground would open up and swallow him.

"Jim paddled that fellow down to the foot of the lake, and he never troubled Beulah again.

"I can just skim over a lot that happened after that. It has mostly to do with Jim Rennick's luck. Up to this time, Jim had been anybody's man; freightin' a little, prospectin' a little, trappin' a little, pickin' up a meal here and there. But now he begun to feel it was time he made a stake of his own. And say, everything he touched went to the bad. It got to be a saying up here for the worst that could happen to a man: 'Jim Rennick's luck.'

"First he was for keepin' a stoppin' house for freighters on the winter road. He hired Jacques Tremblay's shack and stable at Nine-mile Point, and borrowed Dick Foster's mower to put up hay at the foot of the lake. Forty ton of blue joint he stacked there by the little river, and when he went back up the lake one night it all went up in smoke! It was

said around that Dick Foster himself set it because he didn't want no competition so near; but there was no proof. Jim had the satisfaction of knockin' a couple of Foster's teeth down his throat, but that didn't give him his hay back. And it was too late to put up more that season.

"Then he took to tradin'. He got a small line of goods on credit from the French outfit, and opened up at the foot of the lake in the same place where Dave Kidd had traded years before. But the devil was in it. Just before the river closed, a fellow come up with a barge load of stuff, and opened up in opposition. He could sell at Prince George prices plus the freight, while Jim was bound by contract to keep up the French outfit's figures. So the free-trader got all the fur there was, and Jim's stuff still decorated his shelves in the spring. If that weren't enough, that year didn't the lake rise higher than ever was known before, flooded Jim's store, and spoiled the layout! He come out of it with a debt of eight hundred to the French outfit.

"Now, up here in this country a man has to be careful not to get any particular idea fixed too tight in his head. He's got so much time by himself to think about it that it grows and grows until it crowds all sense out, and he goes plumb loony. Jim begun to think there was a kind of blight in him that withered everything he put his hand to. It got to be a fixed idea at last; a shape of fear as real to him as might be a black wolf that followed him along the trails, squattin' by his fire at night, and waitin' there in the morning to mock him when he opened his eyes.

"But he worked—oh, yes. That was all he could do to forget it. He got to be considered such a worker that when the ice road formed again, even with all he owed them, the French outfit staked him for a team, a right good team, costin' five hundred in Prince George.

"He spared neither himself nor his horses, and he got in three round trips to any of the other freighters' two. Prince George to Caribou Lake Settle-

ment was his route; a hundred miles overland, seventy-five up the ice of the Miwasa, sixty on the little river, endin' up with a seventy-five-mile stretch up the lake in the teeth of the blizzards. He soon got a reputation for makin' the best time, and worked up a good express business on the side, gettin' three times the regular freight rate for small packages. On the return trips, he bought whitefish from the Indians, carried them out frozen, and sold them for good prices in town. Out of this and that he cleared off his old debt, and come March had almost paid for the horses as well.

"When I say he didn't spare his horses, I mean he worked them to the limit, but not so hard as to dull their shiny coats any, or make their round flanks to fall away. Seems like a man is healthier-minded if he's got something to get foolish over. Jim fussed over them horses like they was babies, rubbin' them, and blanketin' them, and feedin' them choice. And he almost forgot the black beast on his trail.

"They was a comical pair, and many's the laugh Jim had at their wise ways. He called 'em Mary and Jane. Mary was a bright bay, with a willin', sweet-tempered disposition, while Jane was a true buckskin, with a black stripe down her back and as independent as a pig. Mary followed at her tail wherever she led; and she had a rovin' tendency that furnished Jim a lot of exercise. A word was enough for Mary; but Jane was the better for a flick of the whip. But ain't it curious? It was Jane with her independent ways that he liked the best; and he was as proud as a lord when he could make her hang her stubborn old head, and come whinnyin' and nosin' after him for apples.

"But this ain't no part of the story. Jim left Prince George on his last trip—March twelfth—with a load of rush groceries for the lake. It was mostly fancy stuff and a lot of express packages; and the load was worth, as it stood, near fifteen hundred dollars. The freight on it, Jim figured, would just about square him with the French outfit and make the horses his own.

"The day after he left it turned warm, and it was thawin' all the way. When he got to the lake, he found five gyppos who had started before him hung up on the shore. The ice was full of soft spots and dark with standin' water. But Jim he knew ice, and his reputation was at stake besides. So he started, and he was right to start; there was no particular danger then. But it kept gettin' warmer.

"The winter road cuts straight across to Nine-mile Point from the river, and then follows the south shore of the lake for twenty miles or so to Fisher Creek and Cardinal's Point. Then she makes a bee line across the narrowest part of the lake, and keeps to the north shore as far as Grier's Point. All this was good enough going. Jim made Cardinal's Point the first night, and Grier's Creek the second.

"There was a little frost the second night, and the next morning broke clear. Roundin' Grier's Point, the ice road heads across a deep bay to the mouth of the Elbow River, and up the river a piece to the French outfit's warehouse. From the Point, Jim could see the buildings five miles away in the clear air, and his heart swelled big in his breast. Reachin' it meant he would be a free man again, with a team of his own as a stake against the future. He was not thinkin' of the black beast then. The horses, they seemed to sense something of what he felt, too, and tossed up their heads and trotted with the load.

"Thinkin' about all this, Jim got careless of the dark spots half showin' through the snow. Halfway across to the river they went in. The horses got across all right, but the loaded sledge sank through the soft stuff with scarcely a crackle.

"Jim jumped off, and with his ax hacked at the traces like a crazy man. But he had no chance. A big piece broke off and sank under the weight of the sledge, and the black water welled up all around the edges. Jim and the horses were pulled in. Jim couldn't swim. He went under more than once, still pullin' at the traces. He was kicked almost senseless by the horses. It was

soon over. She went down slow like. The water ran in between the cracks of the boxes, and then washed over the top, and the horses were pulled down like they had stones tied to their tails. At the last only their strainin' heads showed, and then their stretched and quiverin' nostrils.

"When Jim come to, he found himself lyin' on the ice at the edge of the hole. God knows he wished he'd gone down with the outfit. The only thing that remained of his fifteen-hundred-dollar load was two little wooden boxes that had fallen off the top when she first lurched over. They looked funny lyin' there by themselves on the ice three miles from shore, and nothin' to show how they come there. Macaroni it was, I mind, with them gaudy-colored Italian labels. But it wasn't the load he was thinkin' of. He could have taken the loss of that cheerful enough so he had his team—Mary and Jane—most human they were.

"When life begun to come back to his sore and drownded body, say, the pain was like ground glass runnin' through all his veins; and was nothin' to what was in his head. Because he knew he couldn't help but go loony now. There was a kind of regular, slow swing in his head that beat out: 'Mad! Mad! Mad!' with every stroke.

"The fellows at the French outfit store said he come walkin' in quiet like, with the face of the dead and all wild-lookin'. They couldn't get a word out of him; but they knew without askin' what had happened. There wasn't nothin' anybody could do. They believed, like himself, there was an evil fat in it, and the thought showed in their faces. Only Smitty, the trader, he dug up a little jug of rotgut they was savin' for the twenty-fourth of May, and give him a drink. It was a kind act.

"Say, the raw burn of that stuff runnin' down his throat felt good to Jim. It made a confusion in his head so's he couldn't hear the hammerin'. He drunk until he fell down on the floor. They let him sleep there by the stove. It was near mornin' when he woke, and he was

alone in the store. He lay there for a while feelin' sick like, and slowly piecin' together what had happened. Then it all come to him, and he heard—a good ways off at first—that swingin' like a pendulum: 'Mad! Mad! Mad!'

"He ran out of the store, huggin' the jug under his coat. He ran daft like along by the shore to his own shack, which stood by the summer trail near Grier's Point, a matter of six mile from the store. He bust in the door, and tumbled in. It was cold and moldy inside; the floor had rotted into holes, and the mud chimney had fallen down in a heap, lettin' in a world of snow. It was a fit hole for a sick man to crawl into.

"He lay there for two days without eatin'. Every time the swingin' began in his head, he took a pull out of the jug. The third day she ran dry, and, as the noise in his head got louder and louder, and there was no escape from it, he got in a panic like, and ran out on the ice with his old ax to chop a hole. The water rose up in the hole black and shiny and cold, and he couldn't do it. He tried closin' his eyes and steppin' off the edge. He went back a ways and took it on the run—but he couldn't do it. He pictured himself risin' under the ice and knockin' his head on it, and scratchin' underneath it with his nails.

"So he went back to the shack for his thirty-thirty. He cleaned it careful, like a man who knocks off work for a day to get a moose. Then he rested the butt against a tree and leaned against the muzzle. He couldn't reach the trigger good, and he got a little stick to push it with. But he couldn't do it. It wasn't his nerve, but his muscles that failed him. He could bring his arm up. He could rest the stick against the trigger; but he couldn't make himself bear so much as a thumb's weight on the stick.

"So he thought up a scheme to set off the gun automatically. His brain worked it all out so cool and true he knew he must be mad for sure. He took off his buckskin shirt and cut it into strips to tie with. He cut half a dozen poplar poles; then he chose his spot, and set up two tripods close together to hold the gun pointin' at the

level of his chest. He put in a soft-nose bullet to make it surer; then he lashed the gun on the tripods. She was aimed at two fair-sized poplars that grew close together about twenty feet from the muzzle.

"Behind the tripods he planted a branch of willow in the earth. He put a long thong on it, and, bending the branch forward, staked it to the ground. Then he tied another string from the trigger to the top of the branch. Then he laid a fire very careful on the ground under the tight thong: dry shavings, then splinters, then small pieces of wood, then larger pieces. The idea was to make a fire that would catch slow and steady. When she got going good, the thong would burn through, and the willow branch spring back, dischargin' the gun.

"He twisted and knotted the rest of the buckskin strips into a lariat fifteen, eighteen feet long. When it was ready, he put a match to the shavin's, and ran for the two trees the gun was pointin' at. He figured on three or four minutes before the thong would burn through. He put his back against and between the two trees, passin' the rope under his arms and around behind the trees as often as it would go. Each time round he pulled it until his ribs squeezed in, and knotted it good. He had thrown his pocketknife on the ground, so's he couldn't cut himself out if his nerve failed him at the last.

"Then he looked at the fire. She was awful slow startin'. Away in the middle of the pyramid of sticks he could see a lazy little flame that rose up and went down again without gettin' any grip. Once he thought it had gone black out. Lord! but he was discouraged at havin' to do it all over. But a breath of wind come in off the lake, the little sticks caught, and at last a flame came snakin' through the top of the pile, and he knew it was a go. He couldn't move up or down. He couldn't squeeze around the two trees. He couldn't untie the knots in time. So there was no chance, and nothin' bothered him no more.

"The little fire begun to crackle. It charmed his eyes like a snake charms a

bird. He saw the thong that was stretched above it blacken in the smoke, and then, as a flame licked at it, he saw it stretch and shrivel. He was sorry he had made it so thick. Then the willow branch began to tremble, and he knew that a second or two would end the game. He closed his eyes and tried to pray, I guess.

"He heard a kind of rushin' sound, and the gun exploded. But there he was still. He had to fetch back the idea of livin', as you might say. It was painful. He opened his eyes, and saw a woman standin' in front of him. Her face was a deathly yellow, like buckskin, and her eyes burned like two coals at the back of her head. It was Beulah Kidd.

"They stood lookin' at each other for a full minute, I guess. Jim was sore, and the girl was shakin' all over, so she could neither move nor speak. At last he told her to cut him loose; and she picked up his knife where it lay, and did it. Then she went sly like to the gun and cut the strings that held it. She emptied the magazine, with a scared look at him over her shoulder, and put the shells in her pocket.

"But Jim had a-plenty more in the shack, and he strolled in careless like and got them. When he come out again, at the first move he made to load the gun, she flew at him like a she animal with young. She tried to pull the gun from him, and he laughed, because he knew if anybody tried to stop him, that was all he needed to nerve him to pull the trigger on himself.

"She was no match for him. He pushed her away, and she fell on the ground. All this time she did not say anything or cry out at all. They have a wonderful gift of silence. Her face was like a dead woman's, only the eyes. But when he made to load the gun again, she half raised herself, and held out her arms to him.

"'Jim,' she said, all hoarse like, 'give me a bullet first.'

"Just that was what she said. And it made him look at her very different. 'What in hell do you want to kick out for?' he said roughly.

"I love you," she said.

"Say, that was a staggerer. He dropped the butt of the gun on the ground, and stared at her like he couldn't believe his own ears. 'Me!' says Jim. 'Me!' And he laughed.

"It was all mixed up after that. She cried and carried on as a woman will do when she lets herself go, swearin' he was not the poor loon he knew himself to be, who blighted everything he touched, but the finest fellow in the world, and so forth. He listened in a kind of stupor. It hadn't never occurred to him that any woman could value his ugly carcass, and it changed his outlook considerable. He couldn't doubt it, because it seemed, soon as she heard from a freighter what had happened to Jim's team, she started out to help him. Her folks were camped up Fisher Creek at the time, and she had walked until she came to Jim's place, near fifty mile.

"Jim forgot that he was supposed to be mad, and just looked at her and wondered at how pretty she was, all cryin' like and forgettin' herself, and what a mate for a man, what a fit mate!"

"Put yourself in his place. There he was crazy to end it all, because he'd lost faith in himself, and nobody gave a damn, and now it seemed there was somebody who set a heap of store by him, and believed in him, too. Say, it warmed his heart better than whisky. All this time she was creepin' close to him afraid like; and at last she took the gun out of his hands, and he let her.

"Would you marry a down-and-outer like me?" he said, very bitter.

"Not go to church," she said low. "I didn't expect it. But just to work for you, Jim. You could send me away any time."

"That finished him. He couldn't look her in the face for shame. After that he was like a great baby in her hands. She cooked and made him eat. She brought hay from the stable, and made him lie down and sleep.

"When he woke up, his manhood had come back to him, and he was ashamed of his past foolishness. He took that girl by the hand and marched her into the settlement and up to the parson's house, her hangin' back all the way.

"That's the end of the story. How it turned out is a matter of common knowledge in the country. If you don't believe she changed Jim Rennick's luck, ask the first man you meet on the trail how about it."

When the two partners turned out next morning, they found the young freighter had gone his ways before them. He of the aggressive mustache affected to be unconvinced by the story they had heard, and commented scornfully upon it during their morning's ride. They made Pierre Grobois' stopping house for the noon spell. The incredulous one referred to their meeting on the road.

"Who is the freighter we camped with last night?" he asked old Pierre. "Must have passed by here yesterday. Tall, lanky young feller, with a cool, blue eye."

"Jim Rennick," answered their host.



JUST FOR THE SAKE OF RECREATION

DOLPH B. AATHERTON, secretary of the League of Republican Clubs, is a politician and an authority on good stories. He tells this one:

During a coal strike in Scranton, Pennsylvania, many miners were idle, and the city authorities, taking advantage of the fact, had a lot of work done putting in sewers, paving streets, and laying wires underground. An old Irishman by the name of Mike Dowley had been employed in the mines, but took a temporary job digging ditches in the streets. One morning his friend, Pat Hooligan, saw Mike at work, and exclaimed:

"Hello, Mike! What in the devil are you doing there?"

Mike leaned on his pick, looked up, and said smilingly:

"Oh, I thought I would work while I was idle."

Blanchard's Passenger

By Morley Roberts

Author of "Sea Dogs," "Lady Anne," "Thorpe's Way," Etc.

Few men have had larger acquaintance with the big outdoors than Morley Roberts. His personal experiences while journeying around the world have given him material for many gripping yarns. This is a story of a railroad man and an aviator who are brought together fortuitously—and fortunately.

KID CLARKE sat on the fence at Beulahsberg and watched the two remaining aeroplanes making ready for the flight to Nelson. Beatson's machine had been scrapped at Henderson Creek. Simcox was a wreck at Biglow's Siding. Only Chinnery on his old hay wagon of a biplane, and Lieutenant Blanchard on his *Hawk No. 2*, a monoplane with a Gnome engine, had got as far as Beulahsberg.

"I've half a mind to speak to the lieutenant," said the Kid, who knew nearly everybody in sight. "I'd like to do a fly, and I ain't seen him since he took to the game."

Both of them came from Raynesborough, and he and Blanchard, fifteen years before, had robbed orchards together, though the Kid was the offspring of a wandering railroad man and Blanchard the son of a judge.

"And both of us sat on Raynesborough gals," said the Kid, almost mournfully to his neighbor on the fence.

"Aye, he's some intimate with Senator Curtiss' daughter, ain't he?" asked his partner in the easy job of being out of work and not caring much whether he found it.

"Yep," nodded the Kid; "an' he's a sight more likely to get her than I am to rope in Mary Dexter, the way I'm shapin'."

"You're sure shapin' bad," said his

friend candidly. "The manner you get fired time arter time is surprisin'. It's that gay tongue of yours does it, Kid. Work makes me sulky, and I get my walkin' ticket for that, and you for bein' too fresh. But I've no opinion of this flyin' game. It's a fool's game. I don't hanker none to fall outer the sky, and I don't aim none to be shoveled up lookin' like ras'b'ry pie. Hello! What's that?"

"Gosh!" said the Kid, jumping from the fence.

Being as quick as any chipmunk, he was one of the first to pick up Edward Winter, Blanchard's mechanic, who had come to sudden and surprising grief. He ought to have known better—for he had been monkeying with planes all summer—than to step backward into the sphere of influence of Chinnery's propeller, then buzzing like a big Hoe in a Western sawmill. A blade caught him a chip on the left deltoid and cut him to the bone, and they picked him up all blood, dust, and blasphemy, and took him to the hospital.

And there was Blanchard stuck without his passenger to complete the last stage to Nelson, one hundred and twenty miles east by south from Beulahsburg. Even Chinnery, when he found that by some miracle his propeller was not damaged, could hardly help smiling to think that this disposed of his only competitor. They were due to start in a few

minutes, and according to Chinnery, who knew the boys, they were not likely to crowd Blanchard in their eagerness to take Winter's place.

"It takes a bull to make one run here," said Chinnery, "and it's long odds they won't fly. Bet you ten dollars to a quarter you don't rope one in, Blanchard."

The lieutenant took the bet, and asked one of the crowd to volunteer. His suggestion of a fifty-dollar fee was received in solemn silence, and he rose to a hundred for the hero who would board the *Hawk* and go to Nelson. Even at that rate, there were no takers, and one half-drunk hayseed who began to consider the question was led away indignantly by two shrill-voiced women, who denounced Blanchard as a murderer. Then the fence adorners owned they did not care for the job.

"We ain't zactly in it," they murmured, in reply to Blanchard's enticements, and then Kid Clarke touched him on the arm. The lieutenant turned and faced some one of whom it was not easy to say whether he was a man or a boy. But the Kid looked hard and earnest; and, in spite of his wild and racketty disposition, he had a good mouth and jaw, which the aviator noticed at once.

"I'll go," said the Kid.

"What are you?" asked Blanchard.

"Been railroadin' all my life," said Kid Clarke, as if he was sixty. "Now I'm an operator lookin' for a job."

"And you think you can stand this, eh?" asked the lieutenant.

"I reckon," said the Kid simply.

"Don't you go, Kid," urged one of the crowd.

"Cayn't be worse than brakin' on the M. T. & W.," said the Kid; and such of them as knew the roadbed of that celebrated bad railroad might have agreed with him.

"Haven't I seen you before?" asked Blanchard.

"Sure pop, lieutenant," said the Kid blandly. "I'm Kid Clarke, of Raynesborough."

And Blanchard laughed and held out his hand.

"Shake, Kid," he said genially. "I

felt sure I'd seen you. Well, we shan't steal apples together any more, but if you like to come——"

"Oh, I'm comin'," said the Kid. "Last time I seen you was over to Senator Curtiss'; but I didn't like to speak, Miss Curtiss bein' with you."

By the twinkle in Clarke's eye, Blanchard saw that he knew how things stood between him and Adelaide Curtiss. And he remembered that Adelaide had told him something about Mary Dexter and Kid Clarke.

"Why, she always liked you, Clarke," said the lieutenant.

"Yep," replied Clarke, rather dryly, "but she didn't encourage me around lately on account of Mary Dexter. Old Dexter's down on me, you know."

"Because Mary liked you?"

"That's so," said the Kid. "'Twas Dexter got me fired from the dispatcher's office at Raynesborough. And Miss Curtiss, bein' awful set on my workin' steady, was kind of discouraged."

"And you are working steadily?" asked Blanchard.

"I reckon to begin soon," said Clarke. "I'll have to. Mary said so."

"If you come with me, you'll most likely see her to-day," said the lieutenant. "She and Miss Curtiss are coming to Nelson on the ten-forty."

"Gosh, you don't say so!" said Clarke. "Oh, I'm on, you bet, sir!"

"Let it go at that, then," said Blanchard. "And you're not scared to tackle this?"

"With you?" asked Clarke carelessly. "Oh, no, not with you, sir! Mary told me what Miss Curtiss thinks of you. That's all hunky."

But Blanchard laid his hand on his shoulder.

"It's a lot different from anything else, Clarke."

"I always was one for experience," said the Kid, "that's why Dexter said I was no account. You tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

"You'll sit tight and do nothing," said Blanchard, walking toward his machine, that looked like a big dragon fly with a greasy tail. And, as the Kid followed him, he was the recipient of encourage-

ment, advice, and last good-bys from the earth-loving inhabitants of Beulahsberg.

Till that day he had never seen an aéroplane, but he had something of the engineer's eye, and he recognized instinctively that the *Hawk* was adequate to her task. Engineers on the Q. & N. said he ought to be one; and as a boy he had often made a trip with them on a locomotive, feeling mighty set up when they had let him monkey with things under their eyes. He was generally loved all over the road, though he held the record for the number of times he had been fired and taken on again. He knew the Q. & N. from end to end; though, for the matter of that, it was a very short road, and only had two divisions. However, both division superintendents had fired him a score of times, and the chief dispatcher had bounced him and taken him on pretty nearly as often. He had been a call boy in the dispatcher's offices at Quinton and Raynesborough, a brakeman and a fireman, and had worked in the roundhouse at Nelson.

As he said, he was a railroad man from A to Z, and ought to be manager if he could only run steady. He had a heavenly and ingratiating smile, and a natural gift for discovering the soft places in the hearts of men; but that gift was counterbalanced by another, that of getting every one mad in the shortest order by doing other people's work and neglecting his own.

The last thing he did was to fall in love with Mary Dexter, the daughter of the chief dispatcher at Raynesborough; and, although Dexter couldn't exactly fire him because Mary responded to the Kid's advances, he did fire him when Clarke coolly robbed the division superintendent's garden to send his sweetheart flowers.

He was at the moment operator to the second-trick dispatcher, and begged hard to be allowed to stay, offering to work in Mr. Taylor's garden to make up for what he had taken. Indeed, among his many gifts, he was a pretty fair gardener. But Dexter didn't want him.

"Find another road, young feller, and run steady, or you'll be in the pen before you know it," said the chief dispatcher; and, after one tearful interview with Mary, the Kid got as far as Beulahsberg. And now he was going back to Nelson with Lieutenant Blanchard.

"Seem's if I cayn't get away from the old road," said the Kid, with a happy smile. He took every disaster smiling, and, if it led to anything new, he was perfectly happy. And, after all, there was nothing quite so new in the world as flying. He looked at the *Hawk* almost joyfully; and though he knew no more of it than Choctaw, when the devilish and surprising little Gnome engine started he was ready to believe he could fly to New York.

"Holy Mackinaw!" said Kid Clarke. Railroaders are a wandering race, and oaths bred in the woods of Michigan are to be found as linguistic erratics wherever a track runs. "She's a daisy, lieutenant!"

And Blanchard showed him where he was to sit.

"All you have to do is to lay hold, sit tight, and not get scared," said the aviator. "Sure you won't, Clarke?"

Clarke shook his head.

"No, I ain't sure; but I won't squeal even if I am," he replied. Under his tan, he was, perhaps, a little pale, but Blanchard was a soldier, and knew men.

"You're set on going?" asked Blanchard.

"Why, Mary couldn't stop me now," said Clarke. And some of the women on the other side of the fence said it was a shame. They even desired some of Beulahsberg's prime loafers to take the Kid's place, urging them on with cheerful and compelling arguments such as that no one would miss them. But suddenly the roar of Chinnery's motor drowned their cackle, and in another minute his biplane bumped along the grass, raised her tail, lowered it again, and seemed to float.

"Dern my hide!" said Clarke, "it looks as easy as falling off a log!"

At Blanchard's nod he climbed into his place, and the aviator gave him some

goggles, saying that he would want them presently. Then Blanchard followed him.

"All right, Clarke?" he asked.

"Sure pop, lieutenant," said the Kid, and he muttered to himself: "Ain't I an old railroader? The darned old thing shan't scare me worth a cent."

Then the men behind let go, the *Hawk* leaped forward on the grass, and as the Kid said "Hello!" she rose lightly.

"Gosh!" said Clarke when the earth moved beneath him. The sight of it sliding away made him catch his breath. But the higher the *Hawk* rose, the less its speed seemed to be. Yet the little, running men beneath them with uplifted white faces disappeared rapidly, though he heard their shouts. With their cries there came up to him the "hoot-hoot-hoot!" of half a dozen locomotives in the yard. And suddenly he wished he was by the side of one of the engineers down below. He became curiously angry with Blanchard, and was much surprised to find that he felt so.

"Oh, thunder, fetchin' me up here! What did I come for? What'll poor Mary say when I land somewhere lookin' like pie?"

His mind worked oddly. He saw himself in the old railroad boarding house eating pie.

"Oh, let her rip! Mebbe I'll chew no more pie," he said sadly. And then the cheerful and fantastic devil of a Gnome motor, after the wasteful and extravagant manner of her kind, spat a nice little bubble of lubricating oil in his teeth.

"Ugh," said Clarke, "that's her way, is it? I like pie better."

The blast of air from the propeller and the hot fumes of the Gnome's exhaust came full in his face. It seemed strange to him, as his mind cleared, that he could not see the propeller. It was not even a vague mist, like an electric fan. And yet the blurred, racing Gnome seemed wonderfully alive, and communicated its energy strangely to every spar and stay of the machine. It was intense, vibrant, urgent, much more a creature of breathing energy than any locomotive.

"I'm every sort and size of derned fool, I am," said the Kid. "If I ever get there safe, I don't reckon to hanker after being a bird any more."

Nevertheless, though he said so, he began to feel the adequacy of the *Hawk*. Curiously enough, the higher they went the safer he felt, for the whole earth seemed something less and less relevant. He could not judge the height; but everything below him was curiously little and very flat. Roads were like little footpaths; a dust-raising car on one of them looked like a child's toy. It appeared that some one far below them was flying a big box kite. And suddenly he recognized that what he thought a kite was Chinnery's biplane, which they were fast overtaking.

"Crazy old hay wagon," said the Kid. Then he added: "Looks safer than this, though."

And again he loathed Blanchard, and wished he had never been born. His mind swung between a sense of safety and panic, of hatred and admiration of the figure in front of him.

"Chilled-steel galoot!" said Clarke. "He'll kill me, sure pop."

And yet he loved Blanchard. He would have followed him into battle or into any of the common dangers of life without a quiver. Blanchard was made, it seemed, of bronze and whipcord. There was that in him which men will die for. Blanchard's blue eyes and courageous voice would have drawn them on to any high encounter. They knew, and Clarke knew, that he had a fine record in Cuba and the Philippines, and now he sprang to the front in another order of combat, and rose high.

"Too blamed high, I'm thinkin'!" said the Kid, almost weeping, and yet with a grin. "Where's the old earth?"

He knew now that the wind from the northeast was very strong. It drifted them to leeward away from the double railroad track which pointed straight to Nelson. The *Hawk* kept pointing up into the wind, but sagged away toward Raynesborough, lying beyond green hills which looked like rounded grass hummocks. Clarke wiped away a tear. He knew that it was the rush of air that

brought it to his cheek; but he was ashamed, all the same. But he wanted to speak to Blanchard. The aviator's back irritated him in some extraordinary way. He bent forward, holding on with a powerful grip. By now he had lost the feeling that any motion of his would destroy the balance of the machine and send it headlong like a wounded bird.

"Say, boss," said Clarke.

His high-pitched voice came like a whisper to Blanchard.

"Well?"

Blanchard's voice comforted Clarke a little.

"Ain't we sorta high?" asked Clarke.

And Blanchard laughed. His laugh angered the Kid, and then comforted him.

"Huh! He's got a life of his own, I guess," said the Kid. "S'pose he knows his business."

Now he saw Raynesborough far ahead, and to the right. Mary Dexter was there, thinking of starting for Nelson. If she only knew where he was! He began to feel mighty proud.

"Wish I was with her, though," he said between his teeth. "Gimme rail-roadin' every time! A black, howlin' night, a humpy track, an hour behind time, and a gale blowin', ain't a circumstance to this game. I'd sooner be a hobo and batter castles for a hand-out!"

But he knew he wouldn't. It was a mighty fine game, and as easy as going to sleep. An odd feeling of sleepiness came over him, and he shook himself clear of it with difficulty.

Chinnery's biplane was far behind them. The world below was like a map in color. It was misty green, dark and light. The dark patches were forests; the light ones pasture. Then there were wheat paddocks shining. The wind rippled them; they shone like silk. A long belt of tasseling corn bowed and stood up again. The farmhouse looked like a toy.

"White's farm, I reckon," said the Kid. "Never thought I'd fly over it. Old man Curtiss owns it."

Blanchard recognized it, too, or thought he did. He saw now that owing

to the wind they would come right over Raynesborough.

"Wonder if they'll see us," thought Blanchard. He looked at the watch on his wrist, and saw that it was past ten o'clock. "Adelaide wants me on the earth. This is a great game, though. The poor Kid don't like it a bit. If his girl is at Nelson when we land, she'll have something to say to me."

Both the girls would be at Nelson sure enough; for, though one was the senator's daughter and the other only the child of a dispatcher on the Q. & N. road, they had been nursed by the same mother, and were like sisters. Adelaide's father was in California then and her brother in Europe. It was an odd chance that Blanchard should have picked up the Kid.

"Mary will give me a curtain lecture," prophesied Blanchard. "But we're all right."

He had uncommon faith in the *Hawk*. He had tried and tested every spar and wire in her. In France he had seen Gnome engines made. He knew the song of the Gnome; its song of easy work or its complaint of wearing parts, as every engineer must. It went splendidly, and so his heart went. And if Death was beneath them always, to ride over Death was great. The touch of the great wind was a tonic. It braced him, till he vibrated like a wire and sang. The Kid heard him whistle.

"Good old Blanchard," said Clarke. "Wonder if Mary would let me do this sort of thing."

That was the way his mind worked now. Fear went out of him as they topped the hill and ravines which lay between them and Raynesborough. The Kid looked down on them and shook his head solemnly.

"Climbed 'em, I did, when I was knee-high to a grasshopper, and reckoned them next to Heaven's throne," he said. "That's old Blady, king of the outfit, and I'm here, here!"

The round-topped, bareheaded hill showed beneath them like a metal boss to a huge green shield. And now, on the right, he saw the single-line track from Quinton to Raynesborough, and

on to Nelson, where the road joined the M. T. & W. The smoke and smolder of Raynesborough showed in a green space. Glass glittered in the southing sun and jeweled the smoky haze of the town. He looked away to the railroad track, and remembered every cut and culvert, every curve and tangent of it from Quinton to Nelson.

"And more'n once I actu'lly quit the dear old road because Mary said brakin' was too risky a game," said Clarke. He laughed, and wanted to tell Blanchard about it.

"And the lieutenant lifts his finger, and says, 'Come, Kid,' and here I am outragin' the circumambient air and atmosphere! By the great horn spoon and the tail of the sacred bull, I'm a wonderful jackass!"

He felt—what he had never felt before in any risk—that life was a wonder and a miracle, a sparkling dewdrop gemming a swinging bough. He had no words for his thought; but life's strange rapidity and evanescence came to him, and made him thrill. He trembled, yet rejoiced, over the abyss, and a sense of power grew in him. He found very odd words for what he felt.

"Wouldn't have missed it for a nail keg of dollars," said the Kid. But he was a poet, all the same, for one big instant, as most men are when their hour comes.

Now, swiftly coming toward them in the green and molded flat of the world below, Raynesborough glowed and glittered. It held the eyes like a big star among clouds, a dusky rose among cypresses. It was an opal, ruddy and miraculous, secret, deep, as any city is, seen from a height. Kid Clarke loved it. His heart opened to it. He saw great beauty for the first time. And some never see it, and never offer thanks to the lucid air or the wrinkled sea, or the secret forests and the stars. A tear ran down Clarke's cheek. He wiped it away, and said it came of the wind, the swiftness of the *Hawk* sliding in the miracle path of air. But he knew better as the green and gold and silver earth moved beneath them.

Then he looked at his watch. They

were but an hour from Beulahsberg, and Raynesborough opened out to his eyes like a big gem under a glass. One hour!

Why, it was a lifetime, for time is but the register of man's fullness; the table where he writes his passionate life. The sun and stars stay, it seems, and move no more in death's vast moment of eternity.

The town crept and crawled toward them; it and the world slid and ran. Beneath them woods grew and died; ravines opened and shut like great crevasses; rivers were scrolls of silver. That was Homing Creek; that the St. John River. They dried up and passed away as the definition of the town came out like the picture on a plate in the developer. From far off it shone like a jewel with sparks of fire and flame in it and dull maculae of smoke; but now it became a strange incrustation of the earth.

The Kid had no speculative mind. He held on to what he called reality in the evanescent world, and a town to him was bricks and mortar, stone and steel. Yet the sight below him hurt him; things seemed so little. For a moment they were mean. Yet he himself was prodigious. A gust of triumph came to him; it was as if a floodgate opened; as if a jam in a river broke at last. He saw all things with amazing clearness.

He knew every street in the town and every house. There was the boarding house where he had lived. Mary Dexter's home was yonder. Could she live in that brown speck with little plants of trees about? The trees were moss, the house a toy one. That was the courthouse! Men judged other men there; flies were judging flies. Death was there, and liberty and the loss of liberty.

"Death's very little," said Kid Clarke as he looked down on the railroad depot and its shining pattern of interlacing rails. Now he could see, as he had never seen before, its large and powerful complexity, beginning to outgrow the single line of rails. They would double-track it soon if Raynesborough grew and flourished. He thought of Jack Dexter, Mary's father, and of Thompson, the chief dispatcher.

"I'd have liked to stay by the road and be one myself," said Clarke.

A dispatcher is a player, a player of a mighty game, and the penalty of failure is the death of others. There's no other game like it—it's a great solitaire, where the cards are trains, and where there is but a single track the test is high, the strain tremendous. Kid Clarke knew it, for he had copied orders for Dexter, and seen the weight come on the man opposite him as difficulties grew in a tangle, as they will at times.

The Kid knew the line well; but knew how much better Dexter and the other dispatchers knew it. He knew where each train should be when things went easy, but if one dropped out through some accident or mere slackness in making steam, the aspect of the game changed, and one mistake might be wild confusion. The failure of a brain cell to make its due connection spelled disaster, for a man's brain is like a dispatcher's office. And in any game that's the highest possible error.

In the great railroad game of dispatching there's the lap order. That's the player's nightmare, for some day it may come to him, and in one moment of brain lapse he may send an order for death. At night he sometimes wakes sweating to think of it; wakes out of a dream in which two trains speed to meet each other on a single track, when they should have passed at some wayside station, one sidetracked to let the other by. The thought of it is a terror to the dispatcher's friends. But he will not often talk of it. They know he thinks.

"Better being here," said the Kid. "And yet it's a great game." He looked down through the lucid air on the puzzle of the rails in the yard, an etched drawing spread out clearly. Smoke and steam rose; a toy came out of the roundhouse; he saw where he had worked with Dexter when he was learning the game.

Now they swept a little lower. The wind was not so powerful. But the sun was strong. He saw it shine upon the polished rails where they curved at the base of the hills and pointed straight for

Nelson. The Kid felt a kind of condescending kindness for the old road. At one moment he felt superior to Dexter and the operators pounding a brass key for all they were worth. He felt very proud of himself, of Blanchard, of the strenuous *Hawk*, so keen, so adequate, and forgot that he himself was but a necessary deadhead, needed merely to fulfill a condition that the *Hawk* should carry a passenger. Then he remembered it, and shook his head.

"At this identical moment, I don't believe the lieutenant so much as knows I am," said Clarke. "That's a big, four-cornered fact. He's plumb forgot me. I'm nothin' to speak of—"

He grunted to think of it. So a man's mind works. It comes up from its underworld in spirits, like a gushing, intermittent spring in a big river. He lost himself again, and looked down, taking in everything and consciously noting nothing. Dexter was down there; and Thompson buzzed about with the road on his shoulders, and here he was, high in the air. They were safe.

But suddenly he remembered that some one had said of Dexter: "If he ever makes a bad break, he'll not survive it." Some dispatchers didn't. Some went mad, and made an end of things before the horror they had caused cried up to Heaven. The Kid hoped old Dexter never would make that "bad break." After all, he was a good sort, and Mary's father.

No one saw them from below, but the Kid could see everything, Raynesborough now behind them and Barton five miles out. The rails ran to a vanishing point away beyond Neville's Siding. From Barton to Neville's Siding was fifteen miles. There was a train, looking like a brown centipede, just coming up to Barton, where a slow freight was tracked to let the passenger pass.

"Jerusalem, their train!" said the Kid. "Mary and Miss Curtiss will be in it."

He knew Blanchard wouldn't notice it; and the fact that he himself saw everything below and understood it gave him, for a moment, a feeling of compensation for all Blanchard did know. He bent forward and spoke loudly.

"That's the ten-forty out of Raynesborough, sir," he shouted. And Blanchard heard him. He nodded. But Adelaide Curtiss was not then in the forefront of his mind. It worked at a point, on an edge, as if spread out to cover the planes of the *Hawk* and went no farther. He had to attend to the matter in hand; its immediate urgency. So long as he was balanced, so long the machine kept its equilibrium. The sense of power in him was sweet; but he was no more than adequate to the big call on him. He almost resented the Kid recalling her to his mind.

"Oh, shut up!" said Blanchard, meaning that all things were irrelevant but the fine, immediate issue. That was what made him a flyer, one who would shine at the game. Adelaide would come back to her own when he touched earth and withdrew his very soul from the spars and wings of his machine.

"The boss is a wonder," said Kid Clarke. He sighed, and, clutching the stays, looked down again upon the track of the old road, and stared along the line as if he were hypnotized, like a hen made rigid by a chalk mark. He heard the train out of Raynesborough salute them. The engineer had looked up. Faint yet sharp cries came through the air; then the whistle screamed joyously. But the Kid shook his head, and looked down the track toward Neville's Siding.

The train below them wasn't quite on time. There should be the fast freight from Nelson sidetracked at Neville's. This was the fast freight from Chicago through to Quinton, for the A. C. road had running powers over the Q. & N. He looked for the freight, and didn't see her. One part of his mind said she was late. He settled that she was at Nelson still. Something had gone wrong. Old Dexter would be cursing a little.

Yet in the Kid's mind trouble grew; a fine, thin thought he could not yet grasp. For thoughts lie in the soil, and crack and break it before they peep out, white or green or red. He was aware of an acute sense of discomfort, of sudden worry before he knew why. And then he knew. Above the woods, far in

front of him, there came a puff of steam.

Had Blanchard seen this his mind would have signaled nothing to him. His knowledge of railroads was little more than that of any citizen who uses them. But Clarke had been bred on them, and knew the place of everything and its nature. Blanchard heard him call out suddenly behind him.

It was a cry to Heaven—a scream.

Blanchard had seen panic, and had touched it near enough to comprehend its strange workings. He had had a passenger who screamed and cried to be set down again. His mechanic, left behind at Beulahsberg, had once turned white and become deathly sick. Other men had told him such tales. He knew how delicately the mind was balanced. And all the time the Kid spoke incomprehensively.

"A lap order, a lap order! Oh, Dexter's done it!" cried Clarke lamentably.

The words meant nothing to Blanchard, though he seemed to have heard them. What was a lap order? And what had Dexter done? And then Blanchard heard Clarke speak at his very ear. His voice was suddenly cold and clear and urgent.

"Listen! Listen!" said Clarke.

"I hear you," replied Blanchard.

"The fast freight has left Neville's Siding," said Clarke rapidly. "You understand, it should have stayed side-tracked there to let the passenger pass. Dexter's given a lap order. In ten minutes there will be a bad collision!"

It was a wrench for Blanchard to get his mind away from the machine he drove. Not yet was his control automatic, unreasoned, and subconscious. But he grasped the urgency of all Clarke said; the meaning of a lap order was clear to him. Looking down, he saw the little train in which Adelaide sat, thinking of his risks and unconscious of her own. He glanced round, and saw Clarke's face, white where the goggles did not hide the skin, white and yellow and pasty. The young fellow looked awful; his mouth opened and shut. He said: "Quick! Quick! Get down to 'em! Get down to 'em!"

Two thousand feet below lay the scene of the drama, a map of hills and woods and clearings with toy farms in them. Nelson, on the far horizon with its first great skyscraper, shone and shivered in refracting air currents. Its windows glittered and went out again, like working heliographs. Where the *Hawk* sailed the wind was solid, favorable, and easy. Down below there were air holes, sudden wind slides, crevasses, boiling squalls, irregular and fierce. That's the nature of the air; it's like diving into a maelstrom, the tormented waters of a rapid, the swirling whirlpools of a narrow cañon. And again below this it may be easy.

A thousand feet of danger lay below them, and Blanchard knew it. He gathered his mind together with what seemed amazing slowness. As he did so, he lived through long-passed hours, and saw Adelaide come into his life, smiling. It was yesterday! It was a thousand years ago! It was a dream, a vision!

"Oh, sir, sir!" screamed Clarke. He swung forward, and saw the horizon tilt up. For Blanchard shut off the engine, and the roar of the Gnome's exhaust ceased; the tail plane dipped, and the *Hawk* dived. The vast, carven hollow of the earth seemed to swing. Nelson's tower stood on the edge of it, and the Kid cursed Blanchard suddenly with white lips.

He wanted to get hold of Blanchard, but couldn't release the hold of his hands. He hung on with a grip that hurt his flesh. For the imminent fear of death was on him. He remembered Mary no more. Then he heard Blanchard's voice in the hiss of the parted air.

"Hold fast!" said Blanchard, and Clarke shut his eyes. His brain swam. There was a feeling of sickness in him, a sense of dire emptiness. And then the *Hawk* seemed to strike a solid layer of wind. She groaned, the spars and stays twanged. He felt that Blanchard struggled hard; knew he had overcome. Opening his eyes, he saw the green earth again, rising to them like a lifting sea.

He saw the freight ahead running down a steepish bit of grade he knew.

He had worked in a section there. Behind them was the passenger. He seemed to see the dispatcher's room, and Dexter there sitting at his table white as paper and shaking.

"He'll kill himself," said Kid Clarke.

Then the aëroplane fell into an air hole and struck a whirlwind. He shut his eyes again and lost the vision. The *Hawk* was pulled here and there; it tilted and was nearly lost. But Blanchard was a master, and knew the game.

"We're dead, we're dead," said Clarke.

His mind seemed to reach out and feel the hard earth beneath him. The time was a century; it was a second. He went blind and sat in strange darkness, clutching hard at Time. He lost Mary in the drift of terror; she was but the dead dream of a lost life; she went like a leaf in a great wind. And even yet hope was in him, for Blanchard seemed strong. One little voice in him said "Never again!" meaning that if he got down safe he would stay there. And then Blanchard shouted to himself in triumph. He wrenched the plane level till the Kid heard the stays twang like harp strings and the strong wood complain. The machine, suddenly arrested in its downward flight, seemed to rise up and strike him. He sat hunched up, wondering, as the engine started again.

"Oh!" said Clarke. And not two hundred feet below him were the woods, the grade cutting through them; the polished, shining rails. Sickness went away from him; he seemed no longer empty. And at that level in the shelter of the hills the air was nearly still. They had come through the storm into shelter.

"In time, in time," shouted Clarke. And at that very moment he saw the freight train coming fast down the steepest part of the grade on the whole road. She, too, saw them, and the engineer greeted them with his whistle. The Kid saw the man's uplifted face and that of his left-side companion, with a full shovel in his grip. Then she passed beneath them, and the brakemen on the box cars shouted.

"Oh, sir!" said Clarke. And Blanchard, making a short, left-hand turn,

sailed again over the freight. Those in it wondered, and were to wonder more.

"Look out, Clarke!" said Blanchard. "Hold on! I'm going to land ahead of her."

He played on the minds of those in the freight, and he knew it.

"Now, what's doin'?" said the engineer to the fireman. "Here's that crazy air shoot comin' again. Good Lord, she'll be on the track!"

He pulled over the lever and whistled for brakes. And the brakemen ran and set them, so that the shoes ground hard and the wheels made sparks, as the train slid forward. And the *Hawk* rose a little, and then came down as lightly, it seemed, as a thistledown. But she tilted, and Clarke, jumping, missed his footing, and struck his head, and lay insensible as the freight stopped with less than ten yards between it and the *Hawk*, just as Blanchard got his feet upon the earth. When the engineer of the freight looked out, he saw Blanchard turn and look at him with a white face. Then the strangest thing happened, for, just as the engineer called to him, Blanchard turned and ran from him, ran hard along the track.

"He's gone plumb crazy!" pronounced the fireman. He leaped to the ground and went to Clarke, and knew him, for there was no one on the Q. & N. who did not. But the Kid lay quietly, with his scalp bleeding a little.

And still Blanchard ran along the straight tangent of the line. And as he came to where the next curve began, he heard the vibration of the passenger train on the rails; for that on a still day can be heard very far off. As he ran, he stripped off his coat, and at the curve he came on her, and she on him. He stopped and waved his coat, and shouted like a madman, and knew the trainmen saw him. Then he leaped aside, shouting madly as he heard the brake shoes grinding and saw sparks from the rails. The whole world wavered for a moment, and he fell and rose again, walking after the train soberly. It pulled up within ten yards of the white-winged *Hawk* lying upon the rails like a wounded bird.

The passengers, alarmed by the sudden application of the brakes, looked out of the car windows. Many jumped hastily from the train. They saw the *Hawk*, and wondered, and then, seeing the freight train the other side of it, knew that some miracle had happened. Some ran to where the trainmen of the freight stood about Kid Clarke, and others looked where Blanchard came along the ties. Dan Fisher, the conductor of the passenger, ran to him and took him by the arm. Blanchard looked at him and took off his goggles.

"You saved a wreck, sir," said Dan.

"Is Miss Curtiss aboard?" asked Blanchard. "And is Clarke all right?"

Fisher hadn't seen the Kid, but he knew Miss Curtiss. He saw her, then, coming toward them. There were passengers and trainmen all about them, but Blanchard took her in his arms and kissed her.

"How did it happen?" she asked, and he told her rapidly what the Kid had seen. The others listened, and they cheered him. Some looked white and sick, and trembled. It had been a close call; the very closest. Dan Fisher could hardly speak. But he kept his head, and sent brakemen out to stop the wrecking outfit if it came too fast.

"I want to see Clarke," said Blanchard. Adelaide went with him. They found Mary Dexter on her knees by the Kid, who was still dazed. Mary cried as she held him, and he said half foolishly:

"Don't cry, Mary, I'm all right! There's nothing the matter with me."

But suddenly he sprang to his feet, and cried out:

"Mary—Mary—your father!"

The trainmen understood, and some turned away. Old Dexter would know by this time what he had done. He was not the man to endure it.

"He always said when he gave a lap order it would be his last," said Dan Fisher.

But Kid Clarke broke from Mary and ran to the tool box of the *Hawk*. They wondered what he was doing, what he meant to do. He took wire nippers and

wire from the box, and came back, running.

"Dan, you've got a pocket instrument aboard, haven't you?" he cried.

"I—I can't use it," said Dan.

"I can!" said the Kid. "Get it, Dan, get it!"

By now they all understood; and when the Kid started to climb a telegraph pole they cheered him. He cut in on the dispatcher's wire, and, hanging with a leg over the cross-arm, called "D. S., " "D. S." on his instrument for all he was worth. Mary Dexter sat on the ground, crying, with Adelaide's arm about her. The others stood in absolute silence. They knew he was calling the dispatcher's office, and wondered if Dexter was still there. But the moment the wire opened, the Kid knew that Dexter wasn't sending, nor was the operator, but Thompson the chief dispatcher. He knew his touch upon the key. Down below in the crowd an operator from Quinton heard part of what the Kid sent.

"There's no wreck, no wreck," said the Kid. "Tell Dexter right away! Is he dead?"

"He's asking if the dispatcher is dead," said the man from Quinton.

"Hurrah, he's all right, Mary," said the Kid suddenly. And Mary fainted as the crowd cheered. The Kid held a conversation with Thompson, and got orders for the trains. Then he came down.

"The freight will back to Neville's Siding," he said to the conductors. "The passenger will follow. The wrecking outfit is countermaned. They'll send a special to take us into Raynesborough."

They shook hands with the Kid, and with Blanchard.

"All aboard!" said the conductor to the passengers. But, before they did so, the passengers shook hands with both the men who had saved them. The trains went at last, cheering. But Mary and Adelaide stayed where they were.

"What did Thompson say to you?" asked Blanchard.

"He said I could ask him or any one else on the road for what I derned pleased," said Clarke, grinning.

"And you said—"

"I said: 'Tell Mr. Dexter I'll take Mary, to begin with,'" said Kid Clarke.

ANOTHER USE FOR MEDICINE

A CHICAGO family which employs as its butler an old-fashioned negro was constantly annoyed by the doorbell of the house getting out of order. On several occasions an electrician, who used some sort of white powder in his work, had been called in to fix the bell.—

One evening, when there were guests at dinner, one of them complained of a sore throat. The mistress of the house turned to the butler, and said:

"Sam, when dinner is over, go to the drug store and get a small bottle of Dobell's solution."

"Befo' de Lawd!" exclaimed the negro, in genuine distress. "Is dat do'bell out ob ordah ag'in?"

THE ART OF HIDING A MISTAKE

PROFESSOR WILLIS L. MOORE, chief of the weather bureau, is always being guyed for the mistakes his service makes in forecasting the weather. Over the cigars and coffee at a dinner one night, a young physician had a lot of fun at Moore's expense, the professor refraining from denying the accusations against him.

"There is one thing to be thankful for, anyway," said the physician. "I see that you fellows are willing to admit that you are sometimes wrong."

"Well, as far as that is concerned," replied Moore, "we have to admit it because we have no alternative. With the medical profession it is different. You fellows can bury your mistakes."

The Tempting of Tavernake

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "Haroc," "The Mafeactor," "The Lost Ambassador," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

The unromantic Tavernake is introduced as a matter-of-fact Englishman, employed in a real-estate office in London. He has never given a thought to women; but at the outset of the story he saves the life of a young American girl—Beatrice Burnay—who attempts suicide. She agrees to his proposal that she call herself his sister. Mrs. Wenham Gardner, of New York, the fascinating woman who is to become "the tempter," comes to Tavernake's office ostensibly to rent a town house but really to ascertain the whereabouts of Beatrice, as she has seen the girl with him. He refuses the information. Later Beatrice confesses that Mrs. Gardner is her sister, but begs Tavernake to keep silent. Mrs. Gardner arranges several meetings with Tavernake under the pretense of consulting him about a house, and attempts to make him fall in love with her. He is strongly attracted by her magnetic personality but maintains his reserve about her sister. At this time he breaks with his employer and secures an option on property that he plans to develop. When Mrs. Gardner hears of this she asks him to allow her to supply the ready cash for the development. Tavernake accepts her offer and agrees not to mention the matter to Beatrice. Meeting Tavernake a little later, a man named Pritchard takes him aside and, telling him that he is an American detective, warns the young Englishman against Mrs. Gardner and her associates. He tells Tavernake that the woman's friends are international crooks and that she herself is suspected of having made away with her husband. Tavernake refuses to believe the detective, and while the latter is trying to convince him, Mrs. Gardner suddenly appears and takes Tavernake away. When the Englishman repeats the detective's warning to Mrs. Gardner she tells him her version of her husband's disappearance. Tavernake assures her of his complete faith. He is tremendously upset over the situation, and goes to Beatrice, asking her to marry him, for he blindly hopes that in this direction lies peace of mind. She grasps his reasons and refuses. Pressed for the money to take up his option, Tavernake goes to Elizabeth to remind her of her promise. She makes him take her out to dinner. They are nearly finished when Elizabeth catches sight of her husband who has entered the room. She sends Tavernake away, believing that Gardner, whom she has had locked up in the country, has escaped, and has come to exact vengeance. But the man convinces her that he is Gardner's brother, and accompanies her home. There he throws off his mask of indifference, and she suddenly realizes that he is indeed her husband and a dangerous maniac. The madman is about to attack her when Pritchard and Tavernake burst into the room and capture him. Tavernake at last sees the woman as she is, an adventuress, unscrupulous, unprincipled. He tears up the check she has just given him and dazed and penniless, he stumbles blindly to a little seacoast town where he gets work with a boat builder. Some weeks later he learns that Beatrice and her father are to appear at a nearby theater, and he goes to see the performance.

CHAPTER XXX—(Continued.)

TAVERNAKE passed through the scattered knot of loiterers at the door and bought a seat for himself in the little music hall, which, notwithstanding the professor's boast, was none too well filled.

It was a place of the old-fashioned sort, with small tables in the front, and waiters hurrying about serving drinks. The people were of the lowest order, and the atmosphere of the room was thick with tobacco smoke.

A young woman in a flaxen wig and boy's clothes was singing a popular

ditty, marching up and down the stage, and interspersing the words of her song with grimaces and appropriate action.

Tavernake sat down with a barely smothered groan. He was beginning to realize the tragedy upon which he had stumbled.

A comic singer followed, who, in a dress suit several sizes too large for him, gave an imitation of a popular Irish comedian. Then the curtain went up, and the professor was seen, standing in front of the stage and bowing solemnly to a somewhat unresponsive audience. A minute later Beatrice came quietly in and sat by his side.

There was nothing new about the show. Tavernake had seen the same thing before, with the exception that the professor was, perhaps, a little behind the majority of his fellow craftsmen.

The performance was finished in dead silence, and, after it was over, Beatrice came to the front and sang. She was a very unusual figure—in such a place, in a plain black evening gown, with black gloves and no jewelry; but they encored her heartily, and she sang a song from the musical comedy in which Tavernake had first seen her.

A sudden wave of reminiscence stirred within him. His thoughts seemed to go back to the night when he had waited for her outside the theater and they had had supper at Imano's, to the day when he had left the boarding house and entered upon his new life. It was more like a dream than ever now.

He rose and quitted the place immediately she had finished, waiting in the street until she appeared. She came out in a few minutes.

"Father is going to a supper," she announced, "at the inn where he has a room for receiving people. Will you come home with me for an hour? Then we can go round and fetch him."

"I should like to,"—Tavernake answered.

Her lodgings were only a few steps away—a strange little house in a narrow street. She opened the front door and ushered him in.

"You understand, of course," she said, smiling, "that we have abandoned the haunts of luxury altogether."

He looked around at the tiny room, with its struggling fire and horsehair sofa, linoleum for carpet, oleographs for pictures, and he shivered, not for his own sake, but for hers. On the sideboard were some bread and cheese and a bottle of ginger beer.

"Please imagine," she begged, taking the pins from her hat, "that you are in those dear, comfortable rooms of ours down at Chelsea. Draw that easy-chair up to what there is of the fire, and listen. You smoke still?"

"I have taken to a pipe," he admitted. "Then light it and listen," she went

on, smoothing her hair for a minute in front of the looking-glass. "You want to know about Elizabeth, of course."

"Yes," he said, "I want to know."

"Elizabeth, on the whole," Beatrice continued, "got out of all her troubles very well. Her husband's people were wild with her, but Elizabeth was very clever. They were never able to prove that she had exercised more than proper control over poor Wenham. He died two months after they took him to the asylum. They offered Elizabeth a lump sum to waive all claims to his estate, and she accepted it. I think that she is now somewhere on the Continent."

"And you?" he asked. "Why did you leave the theater?"

"It was a matter of looking after my father," she explained. "You see, while he was there with Elizabeth, he had too much money and nothing to do. The consequence was that he was always—well, I suppose I had better say it—drinking too much, and he was losing all his desire for work. I made him promise that if I could get some engagements he would come away with me, so I went to an agent, and we have been touring like this for quite a long time."

"But what a life for you!" Tavernake exclaimed. "Couldn't you have stayed on at the theater and found him something in London?"

She shook her head.

"In London," she said, "he would never have got out of his old habits. And then," she went on hesitatingly, "you understand that the public want something else besides the hypnotism that he—"

Tavernake interrupted her ruthlessly.

"Of course I understand," he declared. "I was there to-night. I understood at once why you were not very anxious for me to go. The people cared nothing at all about your father's performance. They simply waited for you. You would get the same money if you went round without him."

She nodded, a trifle shamefacedly.

"I am so afraid some one will tell him," she confessed. "They nearly always ask me to leave out his part of the performance. They have even offered

me more money if I would come alone. But you see how it is. He believes in himself. He thinks he is very clever, and he believes that the public like his show. It is the only thing which helps him to keep a little self-respect. He thinks that my singing is almost unnecessary."

Tavernake looked into that faint glimmer of miserable fire. He was conscious of a curious feeling in his throat. How little he knew of life! The pathos of what she had told him, the thought of her bravely traveling the country and singing at third-rate music halls, never taking any credit to herself, simply that her father might still believe himself a man of talent, appealed to him irresistibly. He suddenly held out his hand.

"Poor little Beatrice!" he exclaimed. "Dear little sister!"

The hand he gripped was cold. She avoided his eyes.

"You—you mustn't," she murmured. "Please don't!"

He held out his other hand and half rose, but her lips suddenly ceased to quiver, and she waved him back.

"No, Leonard," she begged. "Please don't do or say anything foolish. Since we do meet again, though, like this, I am going to ask you one question. What made you come to me and ask me to marry you that day?"

He looked away. Something in her eyes accused him.

"Beatrice," he confessed, "I was a thick-headed, ignorant fool, without understanding. I came to you for safety. I was afraid of Elizabeth. I was afraid of what I felt for her. I wanted to escape from it."

She smiled piteously.

"It wasn't a very brave thing to do, was it?" she faltered.

"It was mean," he admitted. "It was worse than that. But, Beatrice," he went on, "I was missing you horribly. You did leave a big, empty place when you went away. I am not going to excuse myself about Elizabeth. I lived through a time of the strangest, most marvelous emotions one could dream of. Then the thing came to an end, and I felt as though the bottom had gone out

of life. I suppose—I loved her," he continued hesitatingly. "I don't know. I only know that she filled every thought of my brain, that she lived in every beat of my heart, that I would have gone down into hell to help her. And then I understood. That morning she told me something of the truth about herself, not meaning to—unconsciously—justifying herself all the time, not realizing that every word she said was damnable. And then there didn't seem to be anything else left, and I had only one desire. I turned my back upon everything, and I went back to the place where I was born, a little fishing village. For the last thirty miles I walked. I shall never forget it. When I got there, what I wanted was work—work with my hands. I wanted to build something, to create anything that I could labor upon. I became a boat builder—I have been a boat builder ever since."

"And now?" she asked.

"Beatrice!"

She turned and faced him. She looked into his eyes very searchingly, very wistfully.

"Beatrice," he said, "I ask you once more, only differently. Will you marry me now? I'll find some work. I'll make enough money for us. Do you remember," he went on, "how I used to talk, how I used to feel that I had only to put forth my strength and I could win anything? I'll feel like that again, Beatrice, if you'll come to me."

She shook her head slowly. She looked away from him with a sigh. She had the air of one who has sought for something which she has failed to find.

"You mustn't think of that again, Leonard," she told him. "It would be quite impossible. This is the only way I can save my father. We have a tour that will take us the best part of another year."

"But you are sacrificing yourself," he declared. "I will keep your father."

"It isn't that only," she replied. "For one thing, I couldn't let you; and for another, it isn't only the money, it's the work. As long as he's made to think that the public expect him every night,

he keeps off drinking too much. There is nothing else in the whole world which would keep him steady. Don't look as though you didn't understand, Leonard. He is my father, you know, and there isn't anything more terrible than to see any one who has a claim on us give way to anything like that. You mayn't quite approve, but please believe that I am doing what I feel to be right."

The little fire had gone out. Beatrice glanced at the clock and put on her jacket again.

"I am sorry, Leonard," she said, "but I think I must go and fetch father now. You can walk with me there, if you will. It has been very good to see you again. For the rest, I don't know what to say to you. Do you think that it is quite what you were meant for—to build boats?"

"I don't seem to have any other ambition," he answered wearily. "When I read in the paper this morning that you and your father were here, things seemed suddenly different. I came at once. I didn't know what I wanted until I saw you, but I know now, and it isn't any good."

"No good at all," she declared cheerfully. "It won't be very long, Leonard, before something else comes along to stir you. I don't think you were meant to build boats all your life."

He rose and took up his hat. She was waiting for him at the door. Again they passed down the narrow street.

"Tell me, Beatrice," he begged, "is it because you don't like me well enough that you won't listen to what I ask?"

For a moment, she half closed her eyes, as though in pain. Then she laughed; not, perhaps, very naturally. They were standing now by the door of the tavern.

"Leonard," she said, "you are very young in years, but you are a baby in experience. Mind, there are other reasons why I could not—would not dream of marrying you; other reasons which are absolutely sufficient, but—do you know that you have asked me twice, and you have never once said that you cared, that you have never once looked as though you cared? No, don't, please,"

she interrupted, "don't explain anything. You see, a woman always knows—too well, sometimes."

She nodded, and passed in through the swinging doors. Standing out there in the narrow, crooked street, Tavernake heard the clapping and applause which greeted her entrance; he heard her father's voice. Some one struck a note at the piano—she was going to sing. Very slowly he turned away and walked down the cobbled hill.

CHAPTER XXXI. PRITCHARD'S GOOD NEWS.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, Ruth came home from the village and found Tavernake hard at work on his boat. She put down her basket and stopped by his side.

"So you are back again," she remarked.

"Yes, I am back again."

"And nothing has happened?"

"Nothing has happened," he assented wearily. "Nothing ever will happen now."

She smiled.

"You mean that you will stay here and build boats all your life?"

"That is what I mean to do," he announced.

She laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Don't believe it, Leonard," she said. "There is other work for you in the world somewhere, just as there is for me."

He shook his head, and she picked up her basket again, smiling.

"Your time will come, as it comes to the rest of us," she declared cheerfully. "You won't want to sit here and bury your talent in the sands all your days. Have you heard what is going to happen to me?"

"No! Something good, I hope."

"My father's favorite niece is coming to live with us—there are seven of them altogether, and farming doesn't pay like it used to, so Margaret is coming here. Father says that if she is as handy as she used to be, I may go back to the schools almost at once."

Tavernake was silent for a moment.

Then he got up and threw down his tools.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "If I am not becoming the most selfish brute that ever breathed! Do you know, the first thought I had was that I should miss you? You are right, young woman, I must get out of this."

She disappeared into the house, smiling, and Tavernake called out to Nicholls, who was sitting on the wall.

"Mr. Nicholls," he asked, "how much notice do you want?"

Matthew Nicholls removed his pipe from his mouth.

"Why, I don't know that I'm particular," he replied, "being as you want to go. Between you and me, I'm gettin' fat and lazy since you came. There ain't enough work for two, and that's all there is to it; and, being as you're young and active, why, I've left it to you; and look at my arms."

He held them up.

"Used to be all muscle, now they're nothin' but bloomin' pap. And no' but two glasses of beer a day extra have I drunk, just to pass the time. You can stay if you will, young man, but you can go out fishin' and leave me the work, and I'll pay you just the same, for I'm not saying that I don't like your company. Or you can go when you please, and that's the end of it."

Matthew Nicholls spat upon the stones and replaced his pipe in his mouth. Tavernake came in and sat down by his side.

"Look here," he said, "I believe you are right. I'll stay another week, but I'll take things easy. You get on with the boat now. I'll sit here and smoke."

Nicholls grunted but obeyed, and for the next few days Tavernake loafed. On his return one afternoon from a long walk, he saw a familiar figure sitting upon the sea wall in front of the workshop; a familiar figure, but a strange one in these parts. It was Mr. Pritchard, in an American felt hat, and smoking a very black cigar. He leaned over and nodded to Tavernake, who was staring at him aghast.

"Hello, old man!" he called out. "Run you to earth, you see!"

"Yes, I see!" Tavernake exclaimed.

"Come up here and let's talk," Pritchard continued.

Tavernake obeyed. Pritchard looked him over approvingly. Tavernake was roughly dressed in those days, but as a man he had certainly developed.

"Say, you're looking fine," his visitor remarked. "What wouldn't I give for that color and those shoulders!"

"It is a healthy life," Tavernake admitted. "Do you mean that you've come down here to see me?"

"That's so," Pritchard announced; "down here to see you, and for no other reason. Not but that the scenery isn't all it should be, and that sort of thing," he went on, "but I am not putting up any bluff about it. It's you I am here to talk to. Are you ready? Shall I go straight ahead?"

"If you please," Tavernake said, slowly filling his pipe.

"You dropped out of things pretty sudden," Pritchard continued. "It didn't take me much guessing to reckon up why. Between you and me, you are not the first man who's been up against it on account of that young woman. Don't stop me," he begged. "I know how you've been feeling. It was a right good idea of yours to come here. Others before you have tried the shady side of New York and Paris, and it's the wrong treatment. It's hell, that's what it is, for them. Now, that young woman—we've got to speak of her—is about the most beautiful and the most fascinating of her sex—I'll grant that to start with—but she isn't worth the life of a snail, much less the life of a strong man."

"You are quite right," Tavernake confessed shortly. "I know I was a fool—a fool! If I could think of any adjective that would meet the case, I'd use it; but there it is. I chucked things, and I came here. You haven't come down to tell me your opinion of me, I suppose?"

"Not by any manner of means," Pritchard admitted. "I came down first to tell you that you were a fool, if it was necessary. Since you know it, it isn't. We'll pass on to the next stage,

and that is, what are you going to do about it?"

"It is in my mind at the present moment," Tavernake announced, "to leave here. The only trouble is, I am not very keen about London."

Pritchard nodded thoughtfully.

"That's all right," he agreed. "London's no place for a man, anyway. You don't want to learn the usual tricks of money-making. Money that's made in the cities is mostly made with stained fingers. I have a different sort of proposal to make."

"Go ahead," Tavernake said. "What is it?"

"A new country," Pritchard declared, altering the angle of his cigar; "a virgin land, mountains and valleys, great rivers to be crossed, all sorts of cold and heat to be borne with, a land rich with minerals—some say gold, but never mind that. There is oil in parts, there's tin, there's coal, and there's thousands and thousands of miles of forest. You're a surveyor?"

"Passed all my exams," Tavernake agreed tersely.

"You are the man for out yonder," Pritchard insisted. "I've two years' vacation—dead sick of this city life, I am—and I am going to put you on the track of it. You don't know much about prospecting yet, I reckon?"

"Nothing at all!"

"You soon shall," Pritchard went on. "We'll start from Winnipeg. A few horses, some guides, and a couple of tents. We'll spend twenty weeks, my friend, without seeing a town. What do you think of that?"

"Georgeous!" Tavernake muttered.

"Twenty weeks we'll strike westward. I know the way to set about the whole job. I know one or two of the capitalists, too, and if we don't map out some of the grandest estates in British Columbia, why, my name ain't Pritchard."

"But I haven't a penny in the world," Tavernake objected.

"That's where you're lying," Pritchard remarked, pulling a newspaper from his pocket. "See the advertisement for yourself: 'Leonard Tavernake, some-

thing to his advantage.' Well, down I went to those lawyers—your old lawyer it was—Martin. I told him I was on your track, and he said—'For Heaven's sake, send the fellow along!' Say, Tavernake, he made me laugh the way he described your bursting in upon him and telling him to take your land for his costs, and walking out of the room like something almighty. Why, he worked that thing so that they had to buy your land, and they took him into partnership. He's made a pot of money, and needs no costs from you, and there's the money for your land and what he had of yours besides, waiting for you."

Tavernake smoked stolidly at his pipe. His eyes were out seaward, but his heart was beating to a new and splendid music. To start life again, a man's life, out in the solitudes, out in the great open spaces! It was gorgeous, this! He turned round and grasped Pritchard by the shoulder.

"I say," he exclaimed, "why are you doing all this for me, Pritchard?"

Pritchard laughed.

"You did me a good turn," he said, "and you're a man. You've the pluck—that's what I like. You knew nothing, you were as green and ignorant as a young man from behind the counter of a country shop; but, Lord! you'd got the right stuff, and I meant getting even with you if I could. You'll leave here with me to-morrow, and in three weeks we sail."

Ruth came smiling out from the house.

"Won't you bring your friend in to supper, Mr. Tavernake?" she begged. "It's good news, I hope?" she added, lowering her voice a little.

"It's the best," Tavernake declared, "the best!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

BEATRICE REFUSES.

A week later Tavernake was in London. A visit to his friend Mr. Martin had easily proved the truth of Pritchard's words, and he found himself in possession of a sum of money at least twice as great as he had anticipated. He

stayed at a cheap hotel in the Strand and made purchases under Pritchard's supervision.

For the first few days he was too busy for reflection. Then Pritchard let him alone while he ran over to Paris, and Tavernake suddenly realized that he was in the city to which he had thought never to return.

He passed the back of the theater where he had waited for Beatrice; he looked up at the entrance of the Milan Court; he lunched alone, and with a curious mixture of feelings, at the little restaurant where he had supped with Beatrice. It was over, that part of his life, over and finished. Yet, with his natural truthfulness, he never attempted to disguise from himself the pain at his heart.

Three times in one day he found himself, under some pretext or another, in Imano's Restaurant. Once, in the middle of the street, he burst into a fit of laughter. It was while Pritchard was in London, and he asked him a question.

"Pritchard," he remarked, "you are a man of experience. Did any one ever care for two women at the same time?"

Pritchard removed his cigar from his teeth and stared at his companion.

"Why, my young friend," he replied, "I've found no trouble myself in being fond of a dozen."

Tavernake smiled and said no more. Pritchard was one of the good fellows of the world, but there were things which were hidden from him. Yet Tavernake, who had fallen into a habit, during his solitude, of analyzing his sensations, was puzzled by this one circumstance, that when he thought of Elizabeth, though his heart never failed to beat more quickly, the sense of shame generally stole over him; and when he thought of Beatrice, a curious loneliness, a loneliness that brought with it a pain, seemed suddenly to make the hours drag and his pleasures flavorless.

For two days he was puzzled. Then his habit of taking long walks helped him toward a solution. In a small, out-lying music hall in the East End of London, he saw the same announcement

that he had noticed in the Norfolk newspaper—"PROFESSOR FRANKLIN" in large type, and "Miss Beatrice Franklin" in small.

That night he attended the music hall. The scene was practically a repetition of the one in Norwich, only with additions. The professor's bombastic performance met with scarcely any applause. Its termination was, indeed, interrupted by catcalls and whistles from the gallery. Beatrice's songs, on the other hand, were applauded more vociferously than ever. She had hard work to avoid a third encore.

At the end of the performance, Tavernake made his way to the stage door, and waited. The neighborhood was an unsavory one, and the building itself seemed crowded in among a row of shops of the worst order, fish stalls, and a glaring gin palace.

Long before Beatrice came out, Tavernake could hear the professor's voice down the covered passage, the professor's voice apparently raised in anger.

"Undutiful behavior, that's what I call it—undutiful!"

They emerged into the street, the professor very much the same as usual; Beatrice paler, with a pathetic droop about her mouth. Tavernake came eagerly forward.

"Beatrice!" he cried, holding out his hand.

The professor drew back. Beatrice stood still—for a moment it seemed as though she were about to faint. Tavernake grasped her hands.

"I am so sorry!" he exclaimed clumsily. "I ought not to have come up like that."

She smiled a little wan smile.

"I am quite all right," she replied, "only the heat inside was rather trying, and even out here the atmosphere isn't too good, is it? How did you find us out?"

"By chance again," Tavernake answered. "I have news. May I walk with you a few steps?"

She glanced timidly toward her father. The professor was holding aloof in dignified silence.

"Perhaps," Tavernake said quickly,

"you would take supper with me? I am going abroad, and I should like to say good-by properly. A bottle of champagne and some supper. What do you say, professor?"

The professor suffered his features to relax.

"A very admirable idea," he declared. "Where shall we go?"

"Is it too late to get to Imano's?" Tavernake suggested.

The professor hesitated.

"A taxicab," he remarked, "would do it, if ——"

He paused, and Tavernake smiled.

"A taxicab it shall be," he decided. "I am in funds just for the moment. Come along, both of you, and I'll tell you all about it."

He made Beatrice take his arm, although her fingers did no more than touch his coat sleeve.

"Pritchard came and dug me out," he continued. "I am going abroad with him. It's sort of prospecting in some new country at the back of British Columbia. We see what we can find, and then go to a financier's and start companies, mining companies and oil fields —anything. I am off in a week."

Beatrice half closed her eyes. They had hailed a passing cab, and she sank back among the cushions with a sigh of relief.

"Dear Leonard," she murmured, "I am so glad, so very happy for your sake. This is the sort of thing which I hoped would happen."

"And now tell me about yourselves," he went on.

There was a sudden silence. Tavernake was conscious that Beatrice's clothes were distinctly shabbier, that the professor's hat was shiny. The professor cleared his throat.

"I do not wish," he said, "to intrude our private matters upon one who, although I will not call him a stranger, is assuredly not one of our old friends. At the same time, I admit that a little trouble has arisen between Beatrice and myself, and we were discussing it at the moment you arrived. I shall appeal to you now. As an unprejudiced member of the audience to-night, Mr. Tavernake,

you will give me your honest opinion?"

"Certainly," Tavernake promised, with a sinking premonition of what was to come.

"What I complain of," the professor began, speaking with elaborate and impressive slowness, "is that my performance is hurried over, and that too long a time is taken up by Beatrice's songs. The management remark upon the applause which her efforts occasionally insure, but, as I would point out to you, sir," he continued, "a performance such as mine makes too deep an impression for the audience to show their appreciation of it by such vulgar methods as handclapping and whistling. You follow me, I trust, Mr. Tavernake?"

"Why, yes, of course," Tavernake admitted.

"I take a sincere and earnest interest in my work," the professor declared, "and I feel that when it has to be skimped that my daughter may sing a music-hall ditty, the result is, to say the least of it, undignified. For some reason or other, I have been unable to induce the management to see entirely with me; but my point is that Beatrice should sing one song only, and that the additional ten minutes should be occupied by me in either a further exposition of my extraordinary powers as a hypnotist, or in a little address to the audience upon the hidden sciences. Now, I appeal to you, Mr. Tavernake, as a young man of common sense. What is your opinion?"

Tavernake, much too honest to be capable in a general way of duplicity, was on the point of giving it, but he caught Beatrice's imploring gaze. Her lips were moving. He hesitated.

"Of course," he began slowly, "you have to try and put yourself into the position of the major part of the audience, who are exceedingly uneducated people. It is very hard to give an opinion, professor. I must say that your entertainment this evening was listened to with rapt interest."

The professor turned solemnly toward his daughter.

"You hear that, Beatrice?" he said

severely. "You hear what Mr. Tavernake says? 'With rapt interest!'"

"At the same time," Tavernake went on, "without a doubt Miss Beatrice's songs were also extremely popular. It is rather a pity that the management could not give you a little more time."

"Failing that, sir," the professor declared, "my point is, as I explained before, that Beatrice should give up one of her songs. What you have said this evening more than ever confirms me in my view."

Beatrice smiled thankfully at Tavernake.

"Well," she suggested, "at any rate, we will leave it for the present. Sometimes I think, though, father, that you frighten them with some of your work, and you must remember that they come to be amused."

"That," the professor admitted, "is the most sensible remark you have made, Beatrice. There is, indeed, something terrifying in some of my manifestations, terrifying even to myself, who understand so thoroughly my subject. However, as you say, we will dismiss the matter for the present. The thought of this supper party is a pleasant one. Do you remember, Mr. Tavernake, the night when you and I met in the balcony at Imano's?"

"Perfectly well," Tavernake answered.

"Now I shall test your memory," the professor continued, with a knowing smile. "Can you remember, sir, the brand of champagne which I was then drinking, and which I declared, if you recollect, was the one which best agreed with me, the one brand worth drinking?"

"I am afraid I don't remember that," Tavernake confessed. "Restaurant life is a thing I know so little of, and I have only drunk champagne once or twice in my life."

"Dear, dear me!" the professor exclaimed. "You do astonish me, sir. Well, that brand was Veuve Clicquot, and you may take my word for it, Mr. Tavernake, and you may find this knowledge useful to you when you have made a fortune in America and have be-

come a man of pleasure; there is no wine equal to it. Veuve Clicquot, sir, if possible of the year 1809, though the year 1900 is quite drinkable."

"Veuve Clicquot," Tavernake repeated. "I'll remember it for this evening."

The professor beamed.

"My dear," he said to Beatrice, "Mr. Tavernake will think that I had a purpose in testing his memory."

Beatrice smiled.

"And hadn't you, father?" she asked. They all laughed together.

"Well, it is pleasant," the professor admitted, "to have one's weaknesses ministered to, especially when one is getting on in life," he added, with a ponderous sigh. "Never mind, we will think only of pleasant subjects this evening. It will be quite interesting, Mr. Tavernake, to hear you order the supper."

"I shan't attempt it," Tavernake answered. "I shall pass it on to you."

"This reminds me," the professor declared, "of the old days. I feel sure that this is going to be a thoroughly enjoyable evening. We shall think of it often, Mr. Tavernake, when you lie sleeping under the stars. Why, what a wonderful thing these taxicabs are! You see, we have arrived."

They secured a small table in a corner at Imano's, and Tavernake found himself curiously moved as he watched Beatrice take off her worn and much-mended gloves and look around uneasily at the other guests. Her clothes were, indeed, shabby, and there were hollows now in her cheeks. Again he felt that pain, a pain for which he could not account. Suddenly America seemed so far away, the loneliness of the great continent became an actual and appreciable thing. The professor was very much occupied ordering the supper. Tavernake leaned across the table.

"Do you remember our first supper here, Beatrice?" he asked.

She nodded, with an attempt at brightness which was a little pitiful.

"Yes," she replied, "I remember it quite well. And now, please, Leonard, don't talk to me again until I have had

a glass of wine. I am tired and worn out, that is all."

Even Tavernake knew that she was struggling against the tears which already dimmed her eyes. He filled her glass himself. The professor set his own down, empty, with the satisfied smile of a connoisseur.

"I think," he said, "that you will agree with me about this vintage. Beatrice, this is what will bring color into your cheeks. My little girl," he continued, turning to Tavernake, "will soon need a holiday. I am hoping presently to be able to arrange a short tour by myself, and, if so, I shall send her to the seaside. Now I want you particularly to try the fish salad—the second dish there. Beatrice, let me help you."

Presently the orchestra began to play. The warmth of the room, the wine, and the food—Tavernake had a horrible idea once that she had eaten nothing that day—brought back some of the color to Beatrice's cheeks and a little of the light to her eyes. She began to talk something in the old fashion. She avoided, however, any mention of that other supper they had had together. As time went on, the professor, who had drunk the best part of two bottles of wine and was talking now to a friend, became almost negligible. Tavernake leaned across the table.

"Beatrice," he whispered, "you are not looking well. I am afraid that life is getting harder with you."

She shook her head.

"I am doing what I must," she answered. "Please don't sympathize with me. I am hysterical, I think, to-night. It will pass off."

"But, Beatrice," he ventured timidly, "could one do nothing for you? I don't like these performances, and, between you and me, we know they won't stand your father's show much longer. It will certainly come to an end soon. Why don't you try and get back your place at the theater? You could still earn enough to keep him."

"Already I have tried," she replied sorrowfully. "My place is filled up. You see," she added, with a forced laugh, "I have lost some of my looks,

Leonard. I am thinner, too. Of course, I shall be all right presently, but it's rather against me at these West End places."

Again he felt that pain at his heart. He was sure now that he was beginning to understand!

"Beatrice," he whispered, "give it up—marry me—I will take care of him."

The flush of color faded from her cheeks. She shivered a little and looked at him piteously.

"Leonard," she pleaded, "you mustn't. I really am not very strong just now. We have finished with all that—it distresses me."

"But I mean it," he begged. "Somehow, I have felt all sorts of things since we came in here. I think of that night, and I believe—I do believe that what came to me before was madness. It was not the same."

She was trembling now.

"Leonard," she implored, "if you care for me at all, be quiet. Father will turn round directly, and I can't bear it. I shall be your very faithful friend. I shall think of you through the long days before we meet again, but don't—don't spoil this last evening."

The professor turned round, his face mottled, his eyes moist, a great good humor apparent in his tone.

"Well, I must say," he declared, "that this has been a most delightful evening. I feel immensely better; and you, too, I hope, Beatrice?"

She nodded, smiling.

"I trust that when Mr. Tavernake returns," the professor continued, "he will give us the opportunity of entertaining him in much the same manner. It will give me very much pleasure, also Beatrice. And if, sir," he proceeded, "during your stay in New York you will mention my name at the Goat's Club, or the Mosquito Club, you will, I think, find yourself received with a hospitality which will surprise you."

Tavernake thanked him and paid the bill. They walked slowly down the room, and Tavernake was curiously reluctant to release the little hand which clasped his.

"I have kept this to the last," Beatrice

said, in a low tone. "Elizabeth is in London."

He was curiously unmoved.

"Yes?" he murmured.

"I should like you—I think it would be well for you to go and see her," she went on. "You know, Leonard, you were such a strange person in those days. You may imagine things. You may not realize where you are. I think that you ought to go and see her now, now that you have lived through some suffering, now that you understand things better. Will you?"

"Yes, I will go," Tavernake promised.

Beatrice glanced round toward where her father was standing.

"I don't want him to know," she whispered. "I don't want either him or myself to be tempted to take any of her money. She is living at Claridge's Hotel. Go there and see her before you leave for your new life."

He stood at the door and watched them go down the Strand, the professor, flamboyant, walking erect with flying coat tails, and his big cigar held firmly between his teeth; Beatrice, a wan figure in her black clothes, clinging to his arm. Tavernake watched them until they disappeared, conscious of a curious excitement, a strange pain, a sense of revelation. When at last they were out of sight and he turned back for his coat and hat, his feet were suddenly leaden. The band was playing the last selection—it was the air which Beatrice had sung only that night at the East End music hall. With a sudden overpowering impulse, he turned and strode down the Strand in the direction where they had vanished. It was too late. There was no sign of them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNDERSTANDING COMES TOO LATE.

Tavernake's first impression of Elizabeth was that he had never, even in his wildest thoughts, done her justice. He had never imagined her so wonderfully, so alluringly beautiful. She had received him, after a very long delay, in her sitting room at Claridge's Hotel—a

large apartment furnished more like a drawing-room. She was standing, when he entered, almost in the center of the room, dressed in a long lace cloak and a hat with a drooping black feather. She looked at him, as the door opened, as though for a moment half puzzled. Then she laughed softly, and held out her hands.

"Why, of course, I remember you!" she exclaimed. "And to think that when I had your card, I couldn't imagine where I had heard the name before! You are my dear estate agent's clerk, who wouldn't take my money, and who was so wretchedly rude to me twelve months ago."

Tavernake was quite cool. He found himself wondering whether this was a pose, or whether she had, indeed, forgotten. He decided that it was a pose.

"I was also," he reminded her, "one night in your rooms at the Milan Court when your husband—"

She stopped him with an imperative gesture.

"Spare me, please," she begged. "Those were such terrible days—so dull, too! I remember that you were quite one of the brightest spots. You were absolutely different from every one I had ever met before, and you interested me immensely."

She looked at him and slowly shook her head.

"You look very nice," she said. "Your clothes fit you, and you are most becomingly tanned, but you don't look half so awkward and so adorable."

"I am sorry," he replied shortly.

"And you came to see me!" she went on. "That was really nice of you. You were quite fond of me once, you know. Tell me, has it lasted?"

"That is exactly what I came to find out," he answered deliberately. "So far, I am inclined to think that it has not lasted."

She made a little wry face and drew his arm through hers.

"Come and sit down and tell me why," she insisted. "Be honest, now. Is it because you think I am looking older?"

"I have thought of you for many

hours a day for months," Tavernake said slowly, "and I never imagined you so beautiful as you seem now."

She clapped her hands.

"And you mean it, too!" she exclaimed. "There is just the same delightfully convincing note in your tone. I am sure that you mean it. Please go on adoring me, Mr. Tavernake. I have no one who interests me at all just now. There is an Italian count who wants to marry me, but he is terribly poor; and a young Australian, who follows me everywhere, but I am not sure about him. There is an English boy, too, who is going to commit suicide if I don't say 'Yes' to him this week. On the whole, I think I am rather sorry that people know I am a widow. Tell me, Mr. Tavernake, are you going to adore me, too?"

"I don't think so," Tavernake answered. "I rather believe that I am cured."

She shrugged her shoulders and laughed musically.

"But you say that you still think I am beautiful," she went on, "and I am sure my clothes are perfect—they came straight from Paris. I hope you appreciate this lace," she added, drawing it through her fingers. "My figure is just as good, too, isn't it?"

She stood up and turned slowly round. Then she sat down suddenly, taking his hand in hers.

"Please don't say that you think I have grown less attractive," she begged.

"As regards your personal attractions," Tavernake replied, "I imagine that they are at least as great as ever. If you want the truth, I think that the reason I do not adore you any longer is because I saw your sister last night."

"Saw Beatrice!" she exclaimed. "Where?"

"She was singing at a miserable East End music hall so that her father might find some sort of employment. The people only forbore to hiss her father's turn for her sake. She goes about the country with him. Heaven knows what they earn, but it must be little enough! Beatrice is shabby and thin and pale. She is devoting the best years of her life to what she imagines to be her duty."

"And how does this affect me?" Elizabeth asked coldly.

"Only in this way," Tavernake answered. "You asked me how it was that I could find you as beautiful as ever and adore you no longer. The reason is because I know you to be wretchedly selfish. I believed in you before. Everything that you did seemed right. That was because I was a fool, because you had filled my brain with impossible fancies, because I saw you and everything that you did through a distorted mirror."

"Have you come here to be rude?" she asked him.

"Not in the least," he replied. "I came here to see whether I was cured."

She began to laugh, very softly at first; but soon she threw herself back among the cushions and laid her hand caressingly upon his shoulder.

"Oh, you are just the same!" she cried. "Just the same dear, truthful bundle of honesty and awkwardness and ignorance. So you are going to be victim of Beatrice's bow and spear, after all."

"I have asked your sister to marry me," Tavernake admitted. "She will not."

"She was very wise," Elizabeth declared, wiping the tears from her eyes. "As an experience you are delightful. As a husband you would be terribly impossible. Are you going to stay and take me out to dinner this evening? I'm sure you have a dress suit now."

Tavernake shook his head.

"I am sorry," he said. "I have already an engagement."

She looked at him curiously. Was it really true that he had become indifferent? She was not used to men who escaped.

"Tell me," she asked abruptly, "why did you come? I don't understand. You are here, and you pass your time being rude to me. I ask you to take me to dinner, and you refuse. Do you know that scarcely a man in London would not have jumped at such a chance?"

"Very likely," Tavernake answered.

"I have no experience in such matters. I only know that I am going to do something else."

"Something you want to do very much?" she whispered.

"I am going down to a little music hall in Whitechapel," Tavernake said, "and I am going to meet your sister, and I am going to put her in a cab and take her to have some supper, and I am going to worry her until she promises to be my wife."

"You are certainly a devoted admirer

of the family," she laughed. "Perhaps you were in love with her all the time."

"Perhaps I was," he admitted.

She shook her head.

"I don't believe it," she said. "I think you were quite fond of me once. You have such absurdly old-fashioned ideas, or I think that you would be fond of me now."

Tavernake rose to his feet.

"I am going," he declared. "This will be good-by. To-morrow I am going to British Columbia."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The conclusion of this story will be published two weeks hence, in the first May POPULAR, on sale April 7th.



FLATTERY FOR THE PRIMA DONNA

EDWARD D. EASTON, one of the biggest manufacturers of talking machines in the world, has an idea that everybody is as much interested in grand opera as he is. He gives weekly concerts at his home and makes all his servants, who represent various nationalities, listen to them. Once a Swedish housemaid gave signs of intense satisfaction at hearing a particularly loud and shrill record by the great soprano, Lina Cavalieri.

"So you like that?" asked Mr. Easton, all puffed up because his grand opera had made such a hit.

"Ay t'ink it bane grand," replied Alma. "It sound to me just lak de way de Ireesh cook she cry las' week when hossban' die."



A CONSERVATIVE FINANCIER

MOSES HECK, of Baltimore, Maryland, takes no stock in frenzied finance, neither does he believe in running unnecessary risks. He is rich, prudent, and wise. He was sitting in his office one day when a young man, full of optimism and ideas, rushed in with this proposition:

"Mr. Heck, if you will lend me one thousand dollars, I know how we can make a lot of money. The thing is a cinch, and we can't lose. It's like taking money from a child."

Mr. Heck refused to be carried away by enthusiasm.

"How much money do we need to put this deal over?" he asked in a calm, judicial tone.

"I tell you," said the young man, "we must have a thousand dollars."

"How much will we make?" pursued Heck, still cautious.

"Two hundred dollars, one hundred for you, and one hundred for me."

"Wait a minute," concluded the older man, and went back to his safe from which he took a roll of money that looked big enough to cut a dash in Wall Street.

"Here, my son," he said kindly, "is one hundred dollars. We will consider that we have made this deal and it has been a glittering success. You make your hundred and I save nine hundred."

Mrs. Sweeny Scents a Scandal

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "The Sweeny's Mysterious Guest," "Honking for Sweeny," Etc.

Mrs. Sweeny's word on't: "It's the quiet, determined men who win out in the long run—whether it is the chicken business or love, or politics." Particularly the chicken business, you will say when you hear this "scandalous" yarn of Spotty Beggs

MRS. SWEENEY entered the Boarder's rooms with a newspaper in her hand.

"I see," she began, "that they're accusin' Spotty Beggs of down-troddin' the poor—and him with a heart so soft that it gets dents in it every time it beats."

The Boarder, who had been writing, looked up.

"Spotty Beggs?" he inquired.

"Yes, Spotty Beggs," Mrs. Sweeny said. "He come from up Utica way, and owned a chicken farm that fetched him in fifteen thousand a year. And now this here paper says he's went and cold-storaged all the broilers and settin' hens and things, and is goin' to gouge the common people w'en it comes Thanksgivin' time. I alwus knewed that Spotty was bright about money; but take it from me, mister, no widow ladies or orphans is goin' to be robbed if he knows it. Why, he'd——"

The Boarder interrupted.

"But who is Spotty Beggs?" he wanted to know.

His landlady hastened to explain.

"Spotty," she said, "was called that b'cause he had so many freckles that his face looked like—well, he usta go in restaurants and order chicken salad made out of half light and half dark meat, to match his complexion. He was tall and sorta gawky, mister, with a prom'nt nose and a fade-away jaw. W'en he first come to town, he wore

collars that was so big round that he looked as if he was jumpin' through a hoop all the time. And, to finish off with, he had a kinda cute look, like them Utica folks has that is in town for a turrible time, with eighteen dollars in ones and twos, all done up in a rubber band. The bunko man ain't goin' to get them, you bet. I've saw them parties b'fore, and w'en I met Spotty, who was in town for the races, I didn't think much about him. But, as the time went on, and he began to shine up to Hildegard Dippel, my gosh, I sure did take notice then! Hildegard, you know——"

The Boarder reminded Mrs. Sweeny that he knew nothing whatsoever of Miss Hildegard.

"Well," came the information, "that there doll was some person. Her pa had been one of the prom'nt liquor dealers in Cleveland, Ohio, and he'd left Hilda a awful bunch of change. She come on East just as soon as she got it, for she couldn't stand for the town she lived in. She usta tell me that it was so dead there at night that they pinched pussons for walkin' in their sleep after nine o'clock.

"Mis' Sweeny," she says, 'be-lieve me, everybody in that burg has the own-your-own-home habit. And, as soon as they owns their own homes, they don't do nothin' but stay in 'em. Me for the bright lights,' she says.

"And so she come to New York. Somehow she kicked in with the racin'

folks, and me and her soon was real chummy, for I seen at once that she was a truly nice party. She put in lots of the time at our house, and it was there she met up with Spotty Beggs. The first time she set eyes on him, she froze up so cold you could skate on her. Gee, but there was a matched pair for you, mister. Spotty was a puffec' hick. The lady was class all over. She was tall and full-figgered, like a real live You-no—”

“Perhaps,” interrupted the Boarder, “you intended to say Juno.”

“I know w'at I'm talkin' about,” the good woman assured him. “Gold-dollar Cohen pointed that dame out to me once on a billboard beer ad. He said her name was You-no; and he ought to know, him floatin' round Broadway all the time. The Gold-dollar knows all them show girls, I tell you, mister. And w'en he told me that the lady's name was You-no, he knowed w'at he was talkin' about. I didn't pay much attention to the whole business, anyway, figgerin' that the girl had been hard up and had copped some change posin' for that ad to a artist. However, I ain't goin' to stick her or no other extra characters in this here cast. I got enough to put on the show, with that gangly Spotty, freckled like a russet-apple orchard, and Miss Hildegarde, trim and cityfied and handsome. Of course, there's a few more folks, but they come later.

“My poor, dead husban', Danny, was runnin' a real successful book at the track them days. He seen Spotty floatin' round in thebettin' shed, and begun to cultivate him, b'cause he reasoned that sometimes them hicks has money. So one evenin' he fetched the feller home to dinner. Hilda had been visitin' me in the afternoon, and her feets was under the dinin' table, too. At first she treated the new member like she was a human ice plant. Then she took to kiddin' him.”

“‘Mr. Beggs,’ she says, ‘ain't there the interestin'est stuff in the papers now'days?’ she says. ‘I s'pose you're in for signin' that petition to Luther Burbank,’ she says.

“‘W'at petition?’ he says.

“‘Oh,’ she says, ‘ever so many of them up-State folks,’ she says, ‘has got up one, askin' that man to try and cross peas with lima beans,’ she says, ‘so's this country can raise flat-wheel peas,’ she says, ‘that won't roll off a knife,’ she says.

“Spotty stared at her out of them kind blue eyes of his, and his Adam's apple slipped up and down his neck twice, like the time ball at Washin'ton tryin' to show off. His chin went farther down his neck, and then he grinned.

“‘Haw-haw-haw!’ he says. He looks the girl over, admirin' like. And I seen, right there, that he was hit hard. Also, I seen that him and his pale-brown hair and his gawkiness and freckles had about as much chance with my lady frien' as a guaranteed sock on a long-distance walker.

“He didn't see w'at I seen, though. The only view from where he set was that swell Hildegarde, all did up in a puffecly gorgeous afternoon dress and appearin' like she was the lady that they made the fashion plates from. His eyes was kinda soft and big and wonderin' like—they was the best part of him. And he kept 'em on that girl all the time, while he worked his back-slidin' under jaw on the story of his life. He told the doll—and, of course, me and Danny—his history.

“‘I don't claim to be bright,’ he says, ‘so I ain't never did nothin' to shout about. Up till five years ago, I was awful poor. But I got in the chicken-farm business, and now I make a lot of money.’

“‘Raisin' eggs?’ says Danny.

“‘Nope,’ he says, ‘sellin' patent chicken coops and brooders and such junk. All the chickens I ever raised went and died. So I have to hike round the country and find good-lookin' flocks of them birds. I take pitchers of 'em, and then use the cuts in my literature, sayin' as how them there fine chickens was raised by hand with the Beggs patent brooder, and fetched up to manhood and ladyhood in the Beggs patent coop. Fellers all over the country buys them coops and things from me, and

that's how I make my good livin' out of the chicken business.

"Do them patent things work?" asked Danny.

"Durned if I know," says Spotty. "All I know about 'em is that they sell, and about nine times in ten the parties that bought 'em want to sell 'em back to me. It don't worry me none, though. The only thing that frets me is that I didn't know how mad folks is about chicken raisin' while my mother was alive. She could of had a automobile then 'stead of a—'

"A what?" says Danny.

"Oh, nothin'," says Spotty. And then he switched off on somethin' else.

"Danny seemed real took with the feller, b'cause he was in the same line of business—trimmin' come-ons. The only dif'rence was that my husban' was out after them folks that was forever tryin' to beat the races, while Spotty was layin' for them that thought they could beat pip and gaps and sunstrokes and ringbones—w'atever it is that gets the matter with chickens.

"I liked him, too, but for another reason. I alwus like a man that thinks about his mother a lot—you don't often go wrong w'en you tie up to fellers like that. I guess it's in wimmen to fall for such men, for I seen that Miss Hilda didn't dislike Spotty at all. Only he was such a awful rube that she kept fid-getin' all evenin', fearin' he would do a disappearin' act down through his mile-track collar; and all that would be needed, then, would be a splash to make her holler: 'My gee, he's fell down the well!' And I guess, too, that the man interested us, in spite of ourselves, b'cause of the way he folded up his face after mentionin' his mother. I know that I kept wonderin' all evenin' w'at had happened to the poor lady. W'at had she had, instead of a automobile.

"Spotty come to our house often after that. He liked the city so much that he put a understudy in charge of shippin' them brooders and coops and settin's of eggs to preachers out of a job, that was goin' to make fortunes in the chicken-raisin' business. All the understudy had to do was to bank the

money, ship the goods, and write letters to folks sayin' that w'en them articles was sold they never come back.

"Spotty went to live in a hotel, but the first thing we knowed, he's set up a flat. And the funny thing about it was, that he never asked us there. He'd take us out to dinner, but he alwus patronized a hotel or restaurant; and we knowed he had a Jap that was a fine cook. We didn't understand it at all. And, to make the puzzle a lot thicker, he was forever speakin' about his mother in a regrettin' way, and then shuttin' up all to once. That there thing, and the flat that nobody could get inside of, was enough to make a mystery out of anybody, I guess, wasn't it, mister?"

"Yes," admitted the Boarder. "But, then, perhaps he had his reasons for his attitude."

"He sure did," Mrs. Sweeny declared. "My gosh, w'en we see the—But that part of the story don't b'long here, come to think of it. You'd better know how that long-armed, gawkish yap of a Spotty got along with the girl from Cleveland, Ohio. One evenin' both of 'em was invited to dinner, and Spotty got there first. He had on a collar that fit him, and the thick, red wrists at the ends of his long, hangin' arms was poked through cuffs with link buttons in 'em, 'stead of the round cuffs, with the big, straight buttons that is style up Utica way. Spotty's hair was cut and brushed back in that college fashion, makin' him look as if he wanted to yell 'Rah-rah,' but was afraid his chin would fall down his neck if he done anything like that. W'en Miss Hildegard come in, she just stared.

"Oh, you white-haired che-ild," she says, 'who may you be?'

"Oh, me," says Spotty, 'I'm only the party that was here w'en you come in,' he says, real sassy, like he'd been kiddin' tel'phone girls all his life.

Miss Hilda looked at his shoes and then toward the door. The shoes was all clean and shiny.

"Believe me," she says, 'I don't see no tracks at all this here evenin',' she says.

"Nope," Spotty laughs, 'I didn't

make no freckles on the carpet this time. And, while I ain't braggin' about it, Miss Dippel, I can say, with truth, that I dodged them automobiles, comin' out here, like I was sure city broke.' Them two was at it, like that, good and hard, w'en all of a sudden our cook come runnin' in the room, wailin' like mad.

"'Mis' Sweeny,' she hollers, 'the roast's all burned up,' she says.

"I won't go thrustin' no housekeepin' troubles on you, mister. But you can just make up your mind that them words our cook said was as good as announcean' that there wouldn't be no dinner in the house that night. Them men didn't seem to mind much, though me and Miss Hilda got some flustered. We went out in the kitchen to see w'at had happened, and, w'en we come back, there was my Danny and Mr. Spotty, arguin' about which of 'em would take the whole gang out to a restaurant. Danny won, bein' that the party started at his house, and in a little while we was on our way downtown.

"We'd got off the elevated and was headin' for a place to eat, w'en we passed a old lady on a corner with a package of newspapers under her arm. Nobody took much notice of her. The whole four of us was goin' past, w'en Spotty stops sudden, slips out his wallet, and hands that poor old woman a ten-dollar note. Every one of us seen how much money it was, for the street lights was bright on that corner. Spotty says somethin' to the lady, then he turned to us.

"'Run along, folks,' he says. 'I'll catch up with you in a minnit,' he says. We trotted on, not understandin' at all. Once I looked back and seen the man writin' somethin' on a card and handin' it to the woman. After that he hurried and catched up with us.

"He didn't say anything about w'at he'd did. We went to the restaurant and had our dinner, and went home again. But never a word out of Spotty on the subjec' of paper-peddlin' old ladies. I seen, though, that w'at he'd went and did had made a big impression on the girl from Cleveland. Durin' the dinner, she kept eyin' that long,

freckled party across the table from her; and it seemed to me that there was somethin' admirin' in the look that was in her pretty eyes.

"Spotty may of been the speckled kid; he may of had a bashful jaw, and feets big enough to do two men; he may of been a yap. But there was a big streak of kindness in him that covered up a lot of faults. We'd saw it break out in little ways b'fore. And them gentle, kind ways in a man, mister, appeals to some wimmin more'n jewelry.

"Of course, a lot of ladies is fond of them wife-beatin' brutes that throws cigar ashes all over the floor and cusses about the meals. But there's a brand of dolls that is attracted strong by men that is considerate and big-hearted and good. And I seen that Miss Hilda was one of 'em.

"She kept studyin' the mild, kind eyes of the man across from her, and it was plain that she was goin' over in her mind the good turn that he done that lady with the papers. For the first time, mister, I figgered that Spotty had a chance with her. I don't want you to get the idee that he was a soft, weak sort of a mutt. He wasn't. He was only kinda quiet and easy-goin' and unassummin'.

"As I said b'fore, he was somethin' of a comic pitcher; but it didn't take me long to remember that the fellers that has the pretty, fine-lookin' wifes trailin' round after 'em is sometimes the darndest sights in creation. Just think over your frien's, and you'll find I'm talkin' good dope. So I begun to do a little thinkin' and wonderin' and speculatin'. Then I found myself wishin' that Spotty wasn't so darn mysterious about his flat. Look at it any way you want to, mister, and you'll say that it's at least suspicious w'en a bachelor keeps a flat that he won't let his frien's in. W'y wouldn't he invite folks there? That was the question. W'at was in the flat that he didn't want nobody to know about?

"After that, as the time went by, it was plain to everybody in all of the racin' set that, as far as Spotty Beggs was

concerned, there wasn't nothin' in the whole world but Hildegard Dippel. She was the big drag. And, though she kept pokin' foolishness at her beau, I knowed that she didn't mean no harm, down in her heart. He was one of them persistent parties that don't never know w'en he's shook. And that goes to prove that w'at I said about him not bein' weak was right. Them quiet, determined men is the ones that wins out in the long run, mister. And I was just on the point of makin' up my mind that the weddin' bells was due to ding-dong, w'en somethin' happened; or, rather, the big show-down come.

"Spotty had moved again. I forgot to say that he was the movin'est man I ever seen. W'en he first went to keepin' batch, he told us that he had a four-room flat, and the Jap slept out. After while he moved to a six-room place, then to one that had seven rooms. And, one night, he drops in on us with the news that he'd moved in a apartment w'ere there was nine rooms. Just think of it, mister, nine rooms! Nine rooms for one man and a Jap! I didn't say nothin'; but, be-lieve me, mister, I got busy thinkin'. W'at in the name of sense did that man want of nine rooms? W'at would you do with nine rooms, mister?"

"I wouldn't stay in a big place like that," was the reply.

"Nor no other man with any brains," agreed Mrs. Sweeny. "I thought and thought over that there business, but I couldn't make head or tail out of it. And then I guess my intuition got to workin', for I b'gun to worry about w'at Miss Hilda was a-goin' to think of it w'en she knew. Nine rooms was big enough for a married man with an angry mob of childern—w'at?"

"I see!" the Boarder exclaimed.

"And," went on Mrs. Sweeny, "Spotty was a bachelor—that is, as far as any one knowed. Of course, he'd never let us in his flat to snoop round and see w'at kind of clothes was hangin' up in the closets; but we'd took his word for it that he was a bachelor. We'd took his word—me and my Danny and the pretty lady from Cleveland—

and now look at the darned thing! Believe me, mister, it begun to dawn on me that perhaps it would of been better if Spotty had stayed up to Utica and sold coops and brooders to suckers, instead of comin' to town and followin' the races. Yes, sir, it looked as if our set would be better off without knowin' him.

"About that time, it was a understood thing that me and Danny and Spotty and Miss Hilda was to dine together some place every night. Me and Danny was the chaperoons, so to speak. Anyway, the four of us got on so fine together that we liked the arrangement, and kept it up. So Miss Hilda was due to drop in that evenin'; and it wasn't long after Spotty told about movin', till she showed up. And the first thing that fool man says, was:

"'Well, Miss Dippel,' he says, 'I've moved again,' he says.

"'You don't say,' she says. 'Moved again? My gee, ain't you got nothin' better to do? Movin' ain't no fun,' she says. 'Of all the fathead tricks,' she says. 'Do you know,' she says, 'I think you got embonpoint of the brain,' she says.

"Spotty laughed a little.

"'My other place was too small,' he says. 'I'm a party,' he says, 'that likes lots of room. This new flat of mine has got nine rooms,' he says.

"'Nine!' Miss Dippel hollers. 'For the love of Mike, Spotty,' she says, 'w'at you want of nine rooms? Onct we left my Cousin Otto in our house, in Cleveland, while we went away, and he slept in one room till the bedclothes got too tangled for use; then he slept in all the other beds till he'd slept all over the house. W'en we come back, we found him sleepin' between tablecloths, on the dinin'-room table,' she says. 'I hope, Spotty,' she says, 'that you ain't runnin' a dump like that.'

"'No,' says Spotty, 'I ain't, for I got a Jap that makes the beds—'

"Right here, mister, Danny had to kick in and start somethin'.

"'W-h-e-w!' he whistles.

"'W'at's frettin' you, Sweeny?' says Spotty.

"'You says,' Danny reminded him, 'you says beds. Ain't one enough?' he says.

Miss Hilda set right up and took notice.

"'W'y, Spotty Beggs!' she says, in a kinda gaspy voice. I seen right off that somethin' was doin', so I jumps up, and says to Danny:

"'My gee,' I says, 'I almost forgot. You come right along with me,' I says, 'and see w'at's the matter with the bath-room ceilin',' I says. 'It looks to me,' I says, 'like some pipes is busted somewheres.'

"Danny didn't want to leave; but he come along, just the same. And w'en I got him out of the room, I says:

"'Danny,' I says, 'let them two fight it out,' I says. 'There's sure somethin' funny doin' up Spotty's way,' I says, 'and as the little lady is more interested in him than you or me will ever be,' I says, 'we better let her dig up the dope. You go hide somewheres, Danny,' I says, 'and wait till you're wanted,' I says.

"And with them words, mister, I went soft like to the door of the room where them two young folks was, and listened. Sure I listened. A lady ain't no true lady that won't listen to somethin' that looks real interestin'. I jumped at the chance, for the Lord knows I hadn't had a good piece of listenin' in a month; nothin' but the telephone and the dumb-waiter.

"W'en I got my ear up close to the crack, the lady from Cleveland was endin' up a monologue.

"'From w're I set,' she was sayin', 'it looks as if a big hunk of that fifteen thousand you make out of sellin' chicken coops and things, goes for shirt waists and silk stockin's, and—my gee, nine rooms!—and rockin'-hosses and pægoric and schoolbooks. Be-lieve me, Spotty Beggs, if you ain't a triple-plated villain,' she says, 'or a devil that uses a safety razor to keep back the horns instead of w'at it's made for,' she says, 'then there's a misprint in the dream book,' she says.

"'But, Hilda——' begins Spotty, in

the soft, drawlin' way he talked. She wouldn't hear nothin'.

"'Don't you come round to me with your rubber-tired voice,' she says, 'for I ain't goin' to be the little simp no longer,' she says. 'I'm wise,' she says, 'and I'm glad I got wise so soon. S'pose I'd let you get away with your young town, or w'atever you call that reservation of yours. If I'd found out later about—'

"She kinda choked, and then stopped. And be-lieve me, mister, I was surprised. Things had gone farther along buttween them two than I suspected. Spotty had called the girl by her first name, and now she was intimatin' that somethin' had been planned for the future. I kinda catched my breath and snuggled closer to that crack. Spotty begun to talk.

"'Hilda,' he says, 'there ain't nothin' like w'at you say. You know I think too much of you to—to—to be keepin' all them things around in a flat that you're tellin' about. Be-lieve me, Hilda, I never bought a rockin'-hoss but onct in my life,' he says, 'and that was for my sister's kid, Pete. Take it from me, Hilda,' he says, 'I'm tellin' the truth,' he says. 'I think too much of even that there gimp, or w'atever it is, on the bottom of your dress to even try to tell you a lie.'

"'W'y, then,' she says, 'are you keepin' up a barracks like you are?' she says. 'And w'y ain't nobody ever saw the inside of it? I ask you that, Mr. Spotty,' she says. 'I ask you that.'

"The feller didn't say nothin' for a minnit. Then, in a kinda soft voice, he tells her.

"'There's a reason,' he says, 'w'y I ain't asked you or the Sweenys up to my flat. Mebby it's a good reason; mebby it's a bad one. But I see now, kiddie, that things has came to a show-down. S'pose you get your hat, and I'll set up a roar for them Sweenys. All this here has got to come out some time if you and me is ever—that is, if you and me is ever goin' to be w'at I want us to be to each other,' he says. And, mister, I ducked away from that door in a hurry, for Spotty had started for it; and it

wasn't more'n a second till he was out of that room and howlin' for me and Danny to get on our bonnets and shawls for to go out.

"We done it in a hurry, and so did Miss Hilda.\ And pretty soon we was all out on the street, makin' a quick jump for Spotty's flat, that was only about eight blocks uptown. Nobody had much to say. The lady from Cleveland didn't say nothin' at all, but swung along at Spotty's side, not touchin' him, but kinda keepin' her distance and actin' uppish.

"Finally we got to the place, which was a nice-lookin' elevator apartment house on Broadway. A smoke gent'm'n w'isked us up in the elevator and let us out at the seventh floor. Spotty stopped at a door and pushed a button. The door was opened by a Jap; and, as we walked in, Spotty says:

"'While this is my flat,' he says, 'I don't exactly live here, for the reason that there ain't room. I had to get myself a furnished room round the corner,' he says. 'There's so many ladies—but you'll see.' We walked down the hallway after him, every darned one of us feelin' scandalized at w'at we'd just heard. Ladies! Gee! I remembered afterward that I kept mutterin' to myself:

"'Ladies! W'at in the name of high heaving have we butted in on!'

"In about half a minnit we got the answer. Spotty steered us straight to the dinin' room. We got as far as the door, then we stopped. For a minnit, the whole gang was struck deaf and dumb, as you might say. Then Danny snickered.

"'Discovered!' he says, and laughs right out loud. For w'at do you s'pose we seen, mister?"

The Boarder could not guess.

"Well," Mrs. Sweeny enlightened him, "we seen about ten of the happiest-lookin' old ladies you ever set your eyes on. They was all at dinner, laughin' and gabbin' and havin' a fine time. The fun stopped, though, w'en they looked up and seen our crowd. Spotty introduced us.

"'Some frien's of mine, ladies,' he

says. Then to us: 'Come on in the parlor and I'll tell you about it.'

"We followed him, got set down comfortable, and he begun:

"'Them folks in there,' he says, 'is all more'n eighty, I guess, and they ain't got no homes,' he says. 'Remember the lady I slipped some money to on the street, one night w'en we was goin' out for a feed?'

"We told him we remembered, so he went on:

"'She's in there, hollerin' her head off. She's happy for the first time in years,' he says. 'I looked her up, and found her livin' in a basement, and manganin' to get on by peddlin' papers. Them other ladies all has got just as rotten, hard-luck stories. Two or three of 'em I picked up while I was driftin' home toward five or six in the mornin's. I found 'em scrubbin' the corridors of the big hotels. Some time, drop in some of those big, fancy places at scrubbin' hour and see the heartbreakin' sights that's there b'fore the guests gets up. Old, white-haired women,' he says, 'that's been mothers and grandmothers, and is throwed out to shift for theirselfs, owin' to some reason or other. I run across them poor people, here and there, and they kinda got me here—' He put his hand on his heart. 'They made me think of things that was real close to home. I guess I never told you about them home affairs of mine, did I?'

"We shook our heads, meanin' 'No.'

"'Then,' Spotty says, 'I will. I ain't proud of it, for she was doin' it w'en I was a big, husky boy, and ought to of been supportin' her—I'm talkin' about my mother and the wash she usta take in. It wasn't long after she died that I got the idee of peddlin' chicken coops and brooders to them amateur farmers and begun to make money. Gee, I wisht I could go right now and get ma and set a automobile down where the washtub was, and say: 'Ma, hop in. It's yours. And if the shuffer don't suit you, fire him, and I'll get you another. I wisht I could do that,' he says; 'but, of course, I can't. But, since I come to this town, I kinda got to seein' my ma in all them poor scrub ladies and

things, so I'm doin' the best I can to make up.' He turns to Miss Hilda. 'It ain't so bad, now, is it?' he says.

"The lady from Cleveland was lookin' at Spotty, and there was tears in her eyes. She couldn't do nothin' but shake her head. He goes on:

"I've applied business principles to this establishment," he says, "and I've got the cost down to where I can afford it. I ain't lived in them flats of mine since I begun to take in the old parties. No man could live in this place. Them dames makes too darn much noise cacklin'. They have a good time, though, and, as long as there's amateur rubes to buy my patent coops, they are goin' to have a home. And now, if everybody's satisfied, let's get out. I'd of told you b'fore, only I thought you'd give me the ha-ha—I sure do look like the big boob when you come to think about it; but I don't care. So put on your kiddin' suits, folks, and get busy."

"We was startin' out, mister; but Danny seemed to think, all of a sudden,

that somethin' was comin' to Spotty. So he puts on his best barroom manner, and says:

"Take it from me," he says, "if anybody thinks they've got any license to hurl any giggles at Spotty," he says, "let 'em go to it," he says, "and I'm here to kick the gosh-darned daylights out of 'em—"

"He was posin' real grand, mister, till he happened to think that we was only two wimmen. Then he got red, and followed along, real meek. Out on the street, Miss Hilda caught hold of Spotty's arm, and faced me and Danny.

"My gent'm'n frien' here," she says, "has been askin' me to marry him."

"Yes, dearie," I says.

"Well," she says, "you two is witnesses to me sayin' "Yes," right here. If I change my mind, which I wouldn't on a bet, he's got a swell breach-of-promise suit. This goes—forty—boo-hoo—ways—" She begun to cry, mister; and me and Danny seen the blow sign in the sky right away, and blowed."

Mrs. Sweeny's next chat is about silk stockings. You will get it in a fortnight, first May POPULAR, on sale April 7th.



THE ABSURD QUESTION

A PROMINENT dentist in Omaha had as his patient, not long ago, a Kentuckian who, somewhat bloodshot of eye and unmistakably nervous, entered the office with the statement that he had a terrific toothache.

"Me tooth is in an awful fix," said the son of the Blue Grass State, showing further signs that he had adopted an alcoholic remedy for it.

"Does cold water hurt it?" asked the dentist, after making a thorough examination.

"Cold water!" roared the Kentuckian. "I haven't had any cold water in me mouth for the last thirty years."



SOME SNAKES

TOO much good-fellowship and hilarity had dulled the once brightest wit of Jerryville, Georgia, and he had fallen into vagabondage after having enjoyed a competency from the practice of law.

"Cheer up, Mark, old fellow," said one of his friends consolingly. "You'll get over this and soon be yourself, but you ought to remember not to let the snakes get into your boots again."

"That's all right," replied the melancholy Mark, "but I'm going to leave this burg for keeps. I'm going far away."

"Where do you think you'll go?" asked the friend.

"I'm going down to South America," explained Mark—"South America, where the snakes are too big to get into a fellow's boots."

The Under Trail

By A. A. Chapin

CHAPTER XXV.

THREE WOMEN.

KITTY TURLEY came to Evarts-ton next day, and asked boldly for Miss Louise Evarts.

Louise received her in the library, where a bright fire was burning. The young lady of the house had caught a cold while on the grounds the day before, and was sniffly and discontented. Kitty, on the contrary, was looking better and brighter than she had for months. The sight of Derry, the sound of his voice, had been food and drink to her starved nature. Moreover, thus fortified anew, she was now ready for a reopening of battle. In her despair she had grown apathetic, had given up the struggle. Now he was near, he was attainable, and there was hope for her. She was ready to fight for him, with any weapons that came to her hand. Indeed, Kitty was herself again, and there was something of the old glow on her smooth cheek, something of the old sensuous fire in her beautiful eyes. She was crazily dressed in a dingy black woolen gown and a frayed scarf, but she was as lovely as a dream.

"How do you do?" said Louise, rubbing her chafed nose with her handkerchief, and pulling a yellow velvet burnoose closer about her chilly little shoulders.

"Nice place, this," said Miss Turley carelessly, glancing about. "I shouldn't care to live in it myself, though. You sent for me?"

Hawkins had been dismissed for having supposedly let Nat Mooney escape, but he remained in Louise's employ, while filling the post of groom in the hotel livery stables. At early dawn he

had gone to the Ridge with a note for Kitty Turley.

"Oh, I'm so bothered!" said Louise pettishly. "I know you said you wouldn't help me, but—but I keep hoping that you will, you know!"

She poked the fire violently.

"I wish you'd talk out," said Kitty bluntly. Louise had motioned her to a chair, but she remained standing. "What is it you want me to do?"

Louise hesitated, and caught her breath. Then she forged ahead, gathering a desperate courage from the sound of her own voice. Secretly she was just a little proud, too—proud of her instinct for intrigue, proud of the plan which she had evolved for the ousting of Juliet.

"On Wednesday—next Wednesday night," she whispered breathlessly, "we are all going to some sort of ghost thing—voodoo, obi—I don't know just what, but it's magic and that sort of thing—in a cottage on the mountain; the cottage of the negro they call Chicken Sam. Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes," said Kitty, who had been listening with frowning attention. "I know every one on the Range. Chicken's down on dad, first because dad backed out of some dog deal they were in together, and next because dad wouldn't let him have applejack he couldn't pay for. But I know him—oh, yes. Well?"

"Then you—you haven't any influence with him?" said Louise disappointedly.

"I can make any living darky do anything I like. Go on."

"Well," proceeded Louise, after a hurried glance around her, "I've heard that they have some sort of signs—or—

or omens, at those voodoo affairs. People get warnings, don't they? Something like fortune telling, I suppose, only spookier. I'm not very clear about it, you see."

"H'm!" commented Kitty.

"Only—only—" Louise began to falter a little. "I thought—maybe—they could scare—Juliet—out of marrying Craig!" The plot was out now, and she went scurrying on with a rush: "Tell her, I mean, that she would have bad luck, or die, or something, if she did! Something like that, you know."

The project sounded inept and childish, even to its originator herself, now that it had been put into plain, illuminating words. Strange how even the meanest words have a way of tearing the veils from our own self-conceits and subterfuges, and show them to be what they are—lame, shoddy things, too weak for the light of day!

"Lord!" said Kitty Turley, staring at her. "How old are you, anyhow?"

Louise flushed duskily, but said nothing. She was rather pitifully ashamed of the fact that she was really much younger than she looked.

However, Kitty expected no answer. "Look here," she went on, with sincere curiosity, "would that really scare you off? A few criss-crosses, and a little blue fire, and the Lord's Prayer said backward, and all that sort of thing? Would it stop you from doing something you wanted to?"

"Oh, yes!" said Louise earnestly, and shuddered. For, like all small-natured romanticists, she was immensely superstitious.

There are those whose craving for sensation reaches into their highest spiritual being. If they are idealists, they try to believe themselves clairvoyant; if realists, they take up mesmerism; if they are intellectual, they become students of esoteric philosophy and metaphysics; if ignorant, they hold by fortune telling and dream books. Somewhere in this latter class belonged Louise Evarts; and though Kitty had a wild streak of mysticism in herself, she had never had any sympathy or understanding for the more primitive and gro-

tesque side of the quality, such as she discerned in Louise.

"I don't reckon Miss Gray would be as easy as you," said the mountain girl, with a short laugh. "She's got nerve, and she's got brains. I've not much brains, but I've plenty of nerve. I don't reckon, now"—and Kitty surveyed her with an impersonal scrutiny—"I don't reckon you've either nerve or brains! But she'd see through a fake, and even if she didn't understand, she wouldn't care two cents. Besides, ma'am, I've already told you that I'm strong for that marriage myself. Why should I—I!—want to break it up, I'd like to know?"

"I—I'd try to do something for you—" began Louise, finding unexpected difficulty in making the bribe for which she had planned so confidently.

Kitty burst out laughing.

"Lord!" she drawled, with more Southern accent than usual. "That is funny! Why, ma'am, dad's got an awful lot of money salted away! I'm going to be an heiress one of these days, I reckon. I don't really need the pay, thanks!"

Louise was uncomfortable, and so as a result she was cross and sullen.

"Of course," she said, vexed, but nearly crying, "you needn't help if you don't choose! Only—only—I'd do anything—anything to keep her from marrying Craig!"

"And why?"

Before Kitty's searching brown eyes, Louise broke down, and poured out her pitiful little romance with Tommy Norton, telling of her dread of losing her brother's fortune, her designs to keep it for herself and Tommy until Aunt Alicia died; everything, good and bad, she told. And Kitty listened to her as she would have listened to the howl and clamor of a strange beast. The girl of the mountains was at least large in her point of view, and strong in her emotions. This bundle of pettiness, avarice, stupidity, and weakness disgusted her.

"Poor baby!" she remarked, not sympathetically, but contemptuously. "So there's a man in your business, too!"

If there was a note of comradeship in this, it was quite unintentional, but Lou-

ise thought she caught one, and followed it up eagerly.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "You are so strong and so quick! You can do whatever you like, and get what you like! You might—yes, I do think you might help me!"

"Get what I like, can I?" said Kitty, in a curious tone. "Do what I like, eh? Not in a million years, ma'am! I can't," said Kitty, with a line showing around her mouth. "I can't get him back."

"You could! You could if you tried! I know you could!" cried Louise. For, indeed, she was impressed through and through with a sense of Kitty's power.

The other girl shook her head.

"Not while she's above ground," she said, with a short laugh. ◀

Then, all at once, the sound of her own words seemed to arrest her. She stood quite still, looking at Louise. Then, in a lower, and quite different voice, she repeated: "Not—while she's above ground!"

Louise shrank instinctively before the cold, strange expression in the great dark eyes. It was impersonal and relentless; it was inhuman, deliberate, and grave.

The two girls stood in electric silence for a full minute. Then Kitty, with a deep sigh, roused herself like one who shakes off a spell, or scatters the heavy mists of sleep.

"Wednesday night, in Chicken Sam's cottage on the mountain," she muttered. "Voodoo—obi. It will be just right! Just right!"

"You will help me, after all?" exclaimed Lottise excitedly.

"Yes," said Kitty. Her voice was ominous, her eyes somber, but Louise, though she was vaguely uneasy, had a shallow little intelligence that could only accept one thing at a time, and she merely realized that her queer and rather terrifying ally had changed her mind.

"You will give her a scare?" she cried.

"Yes," said Kitty gravely. "I will give her a scare."

Suddenly Louise shivered at some-

thing which she felt but could not define.

"Oh!" she gasped, growing white. "You won't do anything dreadful, will you? I mean—I mean—I've heard of people being scared to death!"

"She's not the sort," said Kitty, "to be—scared—to death."

There was the lightest emphasis on the word. Already Louise was ashamed of her silly misgivings. What nonsense! Of course it was all right! A scare would do Juliet no harm, and what else could there be that Kitty or any one else could do? People didn't do "dreadful things" outside of detective stories.

"Then it's all right?" she said, in a relieved and animated way.

"Good-by," said Kitty shortly, and walked to the door.

"Wednesday evening?" persisted Louise.

"Wednesday evening," said Kitty quietly.

She left the room.

By the time she had crossed the terrace Kitty Turley had entirely shaken off the outward and visible signs of the strange and fatal mood which had made Louise shiver. Her eyes were brilliant as before; her soft, sweet mouth was gently smiling.

She saw a tall woman crossing the sloping, frost-browned lawn, and waited for her.

Juliet was in a blue gown that matched her eyes. Her gold hair was drawn back severely from her face. She looked pale and pure, refined by painful thought and hard struggle.

She bowed to Kitty without antagonism, and said: "Good morning."

But the other girl made an angry and disdainful gesture, as though she flung away the greeting, and dispensed with formalities once and for all.

"You and I don't need to talk that way," she said sharply. "It's bed-rock between us!"

"You speak as though you were my enemy," said Juliet Gray, looking at her with her clear eyes. "I am not yours."

Kitty laughed.

"You'd better be!" she said.

Juliet shook her head. Her glance strayed to the distant hills, rose and violet in the late autumnal haze.

"It is not worth while," she said gently. "Very few things are worth while, I think. And I do not believe that enmity ever is."

Kitty stared at her, frowning. This fair girl's remoteness enraged her. Juliet seemed suddenly impregnable, not to be touched nor hurt by little things nor little people. Yet she was very human, too, with her tired, hurt look, and the warm cadence of her voice.

"I don't reckon you want to die just yet," said Kitty casually.

"There are a good many things worse than death," was Juliet's quiet answer.

"Nat came right close to hitting you, didn't he?" And Kitty grinned.

"Very close."

"I reckon," the girl spoke in an off-hand manner, flicking her shabby little boot with her riding whip, "I reckon you don't believe you're in any danger!"

"I cannot see why I should be," returned Juliet, with a colder accent, and a little, proud lift of her head.

"You don't? That's funny!" Kitty appeared to reflect on this. At last she said: "Are you going to marry the Evarts man?"

Juliet drew a long breath. "Yes," she said.

"Certain sure—on the level?"

"Yes."

"I reckon," mused Kitty, "that you are the sort of fool girl that keeps her word if the skies fall. Will you marry him whatever happens?"

"Yes," said Juliet, for the third time.

"Swear it!"

"I swear that I will keep my word to Craig Evarts if it is humanly possible."

"I don't like your way of putting it! Just say you're going to marry him!"

"One of us might die, you know," said Juliet, trying to smile. "Your friend might aim better another time!"

"If you keep out of my way, and never see Derry Blake again," said Kitty slowly, "Nat won't aim at you at all. I told him to shoot you," she proceeded calmly, "because I knew Derry was around, and I thought you might

mix up with things again, and make trouble for me."

The blood rushed to Juliet's face.

"I am not likely to mix myself up in his affairs again," she said coldly. And Kitty knew that it was her hurt woman's pride that spoke. The mountain girl laughed with frank and merciless enjoyment.

"I reckon you felt mighty bad," she taunted, "about his never coming back to see you."

"He was under no greater obligations to come back to see me than any one else," said Juliet, in a level tone. "I think that when he knew he was safe and free, he should have sent some sort of message to both of us, since it was we who helped him to escape. That's all."

Kitty was silent a moment. At last she looked at Juliet with marvelously brilliant eyes.

"You don't intend to see him?" she said.

"No—never!"

"Will you swear that, too?"

"There is no need to swear it. You know that I have no—no wish to see him."

"I reckon," Kitty said, as though making a decision, "I'll give you that one chance. But if you try to go back on what you've just said—look out!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"No—but you will."

All at once the queer, triumphant smile which Juliet remembered played about her lips.

"There's something else," she said. "I might as well tell you now. He never rightly knew that he was—as you say—safe and free."

Juliet stared at her, not comprehending.

"He thought," Kitty went on, "that Nat was dead, and that there was a price upon his head. You see, that Sunday morning, I—didn't give him the right signal, after all. That's why I kept you shut up, so you wouldn't find out till I got ready."

Juliet felt her heart stop, and she gazed at the other girl blankly, groping wildly for words.

"But—but—" she gasped. "You wore white—a white dress—"

"I took off the skirt of the white dress as soon as I was out of your sight," said Kitty Turley, smiling quietly, "and I wore a scarlet petticoat. The signal that Derry saw was—red!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE DARK OF THE MOON."

It is a curious fact that human nature delights in being frightened. Just why the emotion of fear is so precious to us, or just why the world is willing to pay so lavishly for the excitement of experiencing it, forms too large and subtle a question for laymen. It carries one immediately into the study of the mind, which is more puzzling and intricate than a tropical forest, and more grotesque than a paddockful of nightmares. But it is nevertheless true that most people like the sensation of terror, not accidentally experienced, to be sure, but when they make or hire it for themselves. The feelings of a man in a runaway automobile cannot be entirely pleasing, yet the adventurer in Coney Island pays good money for quite a similar thrill as he howls with delicious dread upon the scenic railways.

Accepting this unwholesome truth, we need not be surprised to find the Evertston house party reveling horridly in the prospects of a "voodoo celebration" in Chicken Sam's mountain shanty, and preparing to lie themselves there in the acutest state of pleasurable apprehension. Being highly civilized creatures, they naturally were entranced by the notion of beholding ghostly apparitions, gin-crazed negroes, and sacrificially slain animals, all combined in one festal night.

The entertainment had been arranged for Wednesday evening, it being then the darkest dark of the moon, when witchcraft and devil work go forward most favorably. Chicken, diplomatically approached with a jingling pocket-book, had finally expressed himself willing to stage manage the affair "fo' de folks f'm de No'th."

He was a little puzzled regarding the thing, being a simple soul who took his magic seriously and not as a show. His cabin had often enough been the scene of "cunjer work," but never yet conjure work to order! Just at first, indeed, Evarts had found him dubious and reluctant. Ten dollars, however, was always ten dollars. And after a bit Chicken Sam confided that a great "cunjer doctoress," a traveling voodoo woman, was expected in the Liberty Ridge region at the dark of the moon, and might be induced—for a further personal consideration—to do some "witcher bizniz" for the edification of the visiting strangers.

Incidentally, Molly and the others were vastly thrilled by a warning from Chicken Sam himself: "Reckon dey No'thern ladies don' min' some noise an' glorification, suh—'case niggers, dey runs plumb outen dey hails, come cunjer nights!"

It may seem remarkable that Evarts and the other men were ready to take a party of women to a negro gathering in a lonely spot at night, to look on at a form of festivity known to excite the wildest and least civilized drops of the black blood. But it must be remembered that they all, with the exception of Juliet, were unimaginative; that is to say that while voluntarily in search of sensation they were actually skeptical. They could not grasp the fact that in the twentieth century there could be any danger from things which they recognized as medieval. They refused, in short, to take the matter seriously; they were so made, indeed, that they could not! It was to them a game, a show; and though they thought the women rather silly to want so eagerly to go, they themselves looked forward to a diverting and unusual evening.

It may here be mentioned at the risk of anticipating, that they got it.

The one person who was really disapproving, and who openly advised against the expedition, was Doctor Clement.

"I know these hill darkies," he said earnestly. "They aren't civilized, Craig—believe me!"

"Nonsense, doctor!" laughed the young man. "They've got the franchise; you're behind the times! The girls want to see a 'witcher meetin', and they shall. That's all there is to it; there's not the slightest need to be concerned."

"They'll get drunk!" growled the doctor. "And when they are drunk the dear, playful souls will shoot each other up—and you, too, most probably."

But Evarts would only laugh at him, so he abandoned the point, and politely told his friend to "go to the devil!"

The matter rankled, however, for Doctor Clement was a man who felt responsibilities—other peoples, as well as his own. On Tuesday, so impressed was he that all would not be well with the jaunt, that he rode up to see Mackanerny—whom he liked, and with whom he had had many a pipe and chat, on cozy winter evenings when the Northern sojourners had flitted away, and almost his sole practice lay in the hills.

To Mackanerny, over a toddy and a comfortable wood fire, he unfolded the Evartses' project for the following Wednesday night.

The two men, who knew their mountains, discussed the question, frowning and shaking their heads over the cheery self-confidence and general pig-headedness of the younger generation, which would only take count of what it had already seen, and knew naught at all of the chances of the Great Unlikely. There didn't seem much to do about it, however.

"If I'd get Ted Kipley over with the boys, in case of trouble," so Mack justly said, "Mr. Evarts wad never forgi'e me, and 'twad mak' bad feelin' among the black fellers. Na, na, sir! There'll be little trouble, I'm thinkin'; let be, let be!"

"I'd give something, just the same," said Doctor Clement, "to know that at least one dependable man was there with them—a man who knows something about handling men, and who doesn't think it archaic or foolish to carry a gun! How about you, Mack?"

"Mr. Evarts wad never forgi'e me!" the Scotchman said again. And he

shook his head, though regretfully, for small and quiet as he was, he dearly loved a scrap. "Ye'd not go yerself, doctor?"

"I've a confinement case in Battlebrook," said the doctor, "and the birth of one human being who may amount to something is more important than the lives of twenty of those horror-loving, morbid, scatterbrained society fools!"

The doctor spoke savagely, for when he was exasperated he was forcible.

Just before he left Mackanerny's shack, however, he had an idea which he appeared to jump at.

"Derry Blake is still hereabouts," he said cautiously.

The foreman flashed him a look.

"Aye!" he said. "But ye needn't be reportin' it, for all he is. I saw him on the trail last night, and he stopped and spoke to me as cool as mint—but he says he's not stayin'; just come up for the games at Evartston, says he, as bold as ever! God love the rascal! I dare say it's a woman; 'tis usually so with Derry, ye ken!"

The doctor nodded, with an absent look.

Suddenly he leaned forward confidentially, and began to talk, close to the Scotchman's ear. Mack nodded several times, and when Doctor Clement rode away he had a different air, as though his anxiety and dissatisfaction had been lightened.

Wednesday night came duly round. It was cold and clear, with no wind when what Doctor Clement called derisively "the Evartston voodoo party" started out.

The women of the party consisted of Juliet, Louise, and Molly Davidge. Miss Chiswick was, as she said, used to darkies, and did not care about visiting them, however thrilling the inducement. And Aunt Alicia wisely decided that her nerves were not equal to the effort and fatigue. Evarts, Moss, Ramsey, and Tommy Norton were the escorts. Tommy would gladly not have gone, but Louise could not trust him not to flirt with Miss Chiswick, so insisted on taking him whether he liked it or not.

"I feel sure," sighed Molly Davidge ecstatically, "that we are going to have a wonderful time."

"Wrap up warm!" Evarts went about counseling them. "You've no idea how cold it is higher up in the mountains at this time of year!"

They were all excited and animated—just as though they were going to the theater, Juliet thought. She herself could not rouse her leaden spirits sufficiently to take much interest, except the interest of apprehension. It all seemed to her rather an appalling business, and her nerves, tired out already, shivered at the whole expedition. How horrid, and how unnecessary, was what she said to herself. She detested the very name of voodoo.

The party went in motors to the end of the good road, and there, with lanterns, made a slow and toilsome ascent of the Ridge. It was very dark in the twisting path, though the sky was full of stars. The way led through dense little forest lands, and under lowering ledges of rock. To the bitter temperature of the November night was added the piercing chill of the mountains. Exercise, luckily, kept them from feeling the cold too severely. Once one of the men, seized with misgivings, and suffering from the weather, suggested turning back, but he was outvoted, and they pressed on and up.

The dark of the moon! There is something supernatural and goblinlike in the very phrase, calculated to whip the fancy and curdle the blood. The dark of the moon—when ghouls steal through graveyards, and the powers of Lucifer are abroad! The dark of the moon—when the witchfolk hold high carnival, and warlocks on wild wind horses race through the night! The dark of the moon—when all that is secret, all that is unearthly, stirs in the stagnant blackness, and crawls viperous beneath the chill witch stars!

The night was full of subtle sounds, magnified by the lack of wind. All the airs of heaven were dumb and hushed, and in the electric, empty atmosphere, the earth seemed to talk, and the gnarled mountain trees were moving

things that groaned, as the human beings passed.

Juliet, worn and overwrought, found the silent journey through the darkness a task of horror. Visions, grotesque and dreadful, loomed to her view through woods that closed upon them again like shutters. Her imagination ran riot, and transformed the call of owls to ghostly laughter, and made the scurrying flight of forest creatures sound like demoniac footfalls in the dead leaves.

They carried lanterns, and the monstrous shadows that were cast, leaping and capering along with them, were like sprites of darkness, dim devil shapes of the abyss, mocking their stumbling ascent with ghostly mimicry.

The way was long and steep and tortuous. It seemed a great while before they sighted a little cabin with a light, and knew that they had reached the dwelling of Chicken Sam.

CHAPTER XXVII.

voodoo.

Inside the cabin they had begun to sing:

"Mistah Voodoo Black Man—he come outen
dey fire!
(H'm, h'm, h'm, h'm!
Ts, ts, ts, ts!)
Mistah Voodoo, he come outen howlin' hell
fire!
An' groan (H'm, h'm!)
An' say (Ts, ts!)"

Oh!
"Anybody gwine ter be kill' to-day?"
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!
Mistah Voodoo Man, he grin outen hell an'
say:
"Anybody fo' me ter buhn to-day?"

Rhythmic, yet irregular, the crooned chant had the monotonous and mesmeric qualities of a tom-tom. There was something elemental, primal, about it; human heartbeats, and nerves, and blood, and breathing, made audible.

It affected Juliet most unpleasantly. It was at the same time physical and symbolic, mystic and sensual. It oppressed the soul and the ear as much as the heavy air affected the lungs. It

made Molly Davidge hysterical in a subdued way; she shivered, giggling silently, and pressed closer to Craig Evarts, her childish eyes wide with terror.

Louise, least sensitive of the three girls, was greatly interested and absorbed. The oppression had not touched her yet; she merely thought it astonishing and curious, full of the quality generally termed picturesque.

"Mis' Vampire Lady, she done come outen de tomb!

(H'm, h'm, h'm, h'm!

Ts, ts, ts, ts!)

Mis' Vampire Lady come up in dey gloom,
And sigh (H'm, h'm!)

And say (Ts, ts!)

Oh!

'Gimme dem daid men fo' mah dinner to-day!'

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Mis' Vampire Lady come outen dey tomb an' say:

'Gimme dem daid men fo' mah dinner to-day!'

Three old colored women in turbans sat in the light of the fire and one dim oil lamp, with their black hands on their knees, rocking, rocking. They, as well as the men, smoked stubby pipes, their eyes were closed, and their expressions were frankly vacant. Their thick lips opened and closed loosely as they mouthed the words of their strange song. The chairs on which they sat creaked beneath their weight, for all three of them were colossally fat.

The fire smoked badly, and added thus to the heaviness of the air in the tiny, crowded room. The odors of cooked ham, onions, and some odd-smelling herbs hung about the greasy walls. Old vegetables were drying on strings hung from the ceilings. Some big pitchers and cups were set out on the table on one side of the room.

The cabin was filled with negroes, men and women. They were quiet enough, but there was a sort of fanatic look about their rolling eyes. They swayed, as though instinctively, to the erratic measure of the voodoo chant; and sometimes from one or another of them would come a low, murmuring exclamation.

Peaceable as they all appeared, and for the moment were—to Juliet came

for the first time a shuddering sense of being in a strange land, in the power of an alien people. No savages, no goblins of the night, no animals of another order or another planet than her own, could have seemed to her more unlike her kind, more out of sympathy. She had felt just so in bad dreams, when surrounded by unfriendly creatures, the creations of her restless brain.

She heard Evarts and the others talking amicably enough with the moon-faced Chicken Sam. The chant had stopped. The darkies stood about in outward stolidity, but darting bright, inquisitive glances at the strangers who had come to look at them as they would at a show.

"De witcher 'ooman, she be mighty late!" grumbled Rooster Sam, their host's father. He was a wizened old negro, with yellow eyes like a panther's.

"What witcher woman?" inquired Evarts, acting upon an interrogatory pinch from Molly.

"Ole witcher 'ooman, tur'ble pow'ful cunjurer lady! She done figger on gettin' hyar to Libuhty Ridge, 'bout now, Ah reckon!"

"Might one ask," said Ramsay, with a polite curiosity that seemed ludicrous in the surroundings, "what's the conjure lady's name?"

"Myra, she done call herse'f, suh! We ain' none on us done see her yet. She tur'ble pow'ful conjurer lady!" repeated the old man, with a light in his yellow eyes. "She done talk wid de debbil, her ownse'f! Yas, suh!"

The three negresses here broke out into a wild sort of invocation to the snake creatures—the scaly things beloved of sorcerers from time immemorial:

"Rattlesnake, copperhead,
Blue racer, hoonsnake,
Gyarter snake, glass snake,
J'int snake, blacksnake—

Come up an' talk;

Come up an' walk.

Mistah Woodpecker, he wants—yo'—brains!"

The last line rose sharply to an emphatic yell, ending even more sharply in silence.

The cunjurer women were stooping

over an old gray bag; the fire leaped luridly upon their crouching figures. One woman's turban was dirty white, one was blue spotted with yellow, one was as red as blood.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Molly, with an uncontrollable shriek. "The bag is full of snakes!"

"Not real snakes." Louise was speaking in her most practical tone.

Suddenly they saw something wriggle slowly, melting into a heap of slimy-looking curves. A slender, wicked head rose against the firelight. Louise whitened to her lips, for she loathed rep-tiles, and said no more.

"The props," said Ramsay precisely, "appear to be the real thing."

"It's all right!" Evarts muttered soothingly to the girls. "They're putting them back into the bag. Gad, though, I didn't know they did things so thoroughly!"

"They just wanted to see they were in good working order, I suppose, before the show!" said Charlie Moss, trying to joke.

But the men exchanged stealthy glances. Quiet as these colored people were, all the white visitors by this time had an underlying instinct of distrust and uneasiness.

From among the negroes, a figure glided forward, and said tranquilly: "Good evening!"

It was Kitty Turley. She was in a distant, inscrutable mood to-night, and gave Juliet a curious impression of infinite watchfulness. She spoke neither to Louise nor Juliet directly, but greeted the whole Evartston crowd collectively, with something—it might be noted—of the air of a hostess.

Moss asked her if she was used to this sort of show. And she replied, with a shrug, that all "conjer tricks" were pretty much the same. She had seen a great many, she acknowledged, in her lifetime.

Once or twice Juliet caught her looking at her with a calculating gaze, but she was extremely reticent, and clearly on her best behavior for the time being. One wondered how long it would last! The negroes seemed afraid of her, and

she pushed them out of her way like so many cumbersome pieces of furniture.

One of the negresses threw something onto the fire, that gave out a faint, odd odor.

"Clover blossoms," said Kitty carelessly. "All part of the cunjer tricks. There'll be woodpecker's blood next, I reckon—to make the ghosts come out nicely. And have you had any cakes yet?"

Louise shook her head.

"Aunt Cassy," called Kitty loudly. "Where are your future cakes?"

Aunt Cassy was the old woman in the red turban—the largest and most monumen-tally fat of the three.

"Ah didn't bake none yet, Miss Kitty, honey!" she said, with hesitating earnestness. "Ah thought mebbe ole Ma'm Myra, de witcher 'ooman, 'd lak to make her own future cakes."

Kitty laughed contemptuously, and turned once more to the white people.

"The future cakes," she explained, "are made of honey, and whisky, and some sort of seeds. They're supposed to show what's going to happen, if you eat them at the dark of the moon!"

"I should never eat any at all!" said Molly, with a shiver. "I'd hate to know just what was going to happen, wouldn't you?"

"Sometimes," admitted Kitty, looking again at Juliet, "I dare say it's just as well not to know."

"We cyan' wait fo' Ma'm Myra no more," spoke up little old Rooster Sam. "We kin do cunjer work oursel's! Aunt Cassy is a plumb fine witcher 'ooman her ownse'f! Aunt Cassy, ain' yo' gwine do some voodoo fo' we-all's?"

A chorus of voices caught up the burden:

"Ma'm Cassy—Ma'm Cassy! Ain' yo' gwine do some voodoo fo' we-all's?"

The old woman rocked to and fro for a minute without speaking. Then she took her clay pipe from her mouth, and harshly cried, in a groaning sort of croak:

"Whar am de snakes? Ah cyan' do no voodoo 'thouten mah snakes!"

She closed her eyes, and rocked, holding the pipe on her knee. Suddenly it

dropped and broke. She began to mutter the words of the invocation:

"Rattlesnake, copperhead,
Come up an' talk!
Blue racer, blacksnake,
Come up an' walk!
Mistah Woodpecker an' me, we wants yo' brains!"

Somebody brought her the bag of snakes—it undulated horribly as it was held up, and she opened it with violent yet awkward gestures, that looked like those of a drunken person or a sleepwalker.

Then suddenly, while the negroes craned their necks with a hideous zest, to see the better, she turned the squirming bag upside down, and emptied out the living snakes upon the fire.

Molly shrieked aloud, and hid her face. The white men swore with disgust, and started forward.

But Juliet was before them. She crossed the foul little room with a sort of stately rush, and caught up a shovel standing by the fireplace. But before she could make any effort to get the creatures out of the flames, one of them escaped unaided, and came straight at her, with darting head. It was a long, mottled thing, clearly a rattler. Instinctively, Juliet shrank.

The next moment the negroes, with guttural cries, had closed in about the fire, and Evarts had pulled her away by force. He was very white.

"Wasn't it a rattlesnake?" she asked quietly.

"Yes, but without the fangs," Kitty put in.

She was regarding Juliet oddly. The latter now realized that several of the negroes had also turned, and were pointing her out to each other with rolling eyes and whispered comments.

"Now what's up with them?" demanded Evarts, with irritable suspicion.

"A burning snake is supposed to point out the next person present doomed to die," said Kitty.

"It that all?" said Juliet, and smiled at her.

"Wh-what did they do with the snake?" quavered Molly Davidge.

"It's burned up with its fellows by

this time," said Ramsay, with open disgust. "A very pretty entertainment, I must say!"

"Oh, I say!" murmured Tommy Norton. "How very beastly, you know!" He was feeling quite ill.

"Well, they would have it!" remarked Moss brutally, regarding the pale cheeks of the girls.

It was just at this moment that some one knocked loudly on the door of the cabin. Four knocks there were, slow and heavy. It sounded like a man's hand, but when Chicken Sam opened his door, it was the bowed, black-swathed figure of a negro woman who stood there.

She was wrapped in a big black cloak, and a black shawl was draped over her head, half hiding her dark face, but what could be seen was grim and forbidding. She raised a large black hand, making a sign that the negroes seemed to understand. They groaned, and muttered greetings in varying keys.

"Ma'm Myra?" said Chicken Sam reverentially.

"The witcher 'ooman?" added his father, peering with his old yellow eyes.

She nodded slowly, without speaking, and with a heavy, limping step, entered the cabin.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WITCH WOMAN.

The witch woman clearly was a person to be treated with respect.

She was at once given a seat by the fire, and a generous cup of liquor from the jug. This last she refused with an ungracious shake of the head. She seemed in no sense disposed to be friendly, but the fact rather increased her prestige with the tyranny-loving darkies. She sat, huddled in a chair, holding her shawl about her with a large and muscular black hand, the while she drew circles with her foot upon the floor, and muttered to herself. Occasionally fragments of her soliloquy reached the rest; it dealt for the most part with "Blood an' fire; fire an' blood! Blood dat flows, an' fire dat destroys!"

"She am a pow'ful witcher 'ooman!" declared old Rooster Sam, with respect.

"Yas, suh!" admitted the deposed Aunt Cassy, with a sigh. "She sure am a pow'ful cunjjer lady!"

Aunt Cassy evidently regretted her own displacement as sorceress of the occasion, but she was not resentful. She abdicated in favor of a mightier hand.

Kitty Turley watched the new witch with a puzzled face. She kept near to her—as near as the worshiping crowd of negroes would permit, and stared at her constantly. Once she paused in front of the crouching figure, and looked straight into her face. She and the witcher woman regarded each other for ten seconds without the stir of an eyelash. Then Kitty laughed, and left her.

Juliet, meeting her glance a minute later, was startled. The girl was chalk-white, and her eyes scintillated with what looked to be fury. It seemed as though such a regard must burn what it lighted on. "She looks like a witch herself!" whispered Molly. "Glory! did you ever see such a malevolent expression? Let's keep out of her way!"

"Really," said Ramsay, with a shrug, "I can't see what you would expect of a young lady who admits that she had made a practice of attending these—these performances!"

"Brutalizing affairs!" admitted Evarts cynically. "Look at them all now, if you please!"

The negroes had begun to drink deeply of the fiery, crude liquor that they affected. Kitty helped Aunt Cassy and Chicken Sam to pass the jugs and cups around. The white people wisely refused to taste the stuff, and went without refreshment thankfully, but the blacks swallowed it like so much lemonade. There was nothing to eat—the new witch having refused the honor of making any future cakes—and the raw spirits had every chance to work in the excited brains.

Kitty, carrying a pitcher of the spirits, passed close to Juliet, and, whether by accident or design no one could say, spilled half the contents of the jug over the other girl's shoulder. It

soaked into the heavy wool of her gown, and Juliet could feel it tingle on the skin of her arm underneath.

"You'll have to be careful not to get where there's any fire," Charlie Moss warned her soberly. "That poison is confoundedly inflammable!"

"Too bad!" said Kitty, with a mocking inflection in her voice. She did not look sorry; she looked, on the contrary, triumphant.

Under her breath she added, muttering the words in Juliet's ear: "I warned you! I warned you! Now you must pay; you must take your medicine! You've broken your word!"

She flashed sparks of hate at Juliet, and then, veiling her fierce eyes with her lids, passed on.

Juliet could not guess what she meant, and for the time being she dismissed the question. She was becoming seriously absorbed in the state of the negroes.

Incantations, spells, songs, magic circles, burning herbs, sacrificed snakes, and the blood of a woodbird, recently slain, which had been sprinkled on the hearth—these things had made them well-nigh as drunk with superstitious frenzy as with alcohol. Between these two exciting influences they were rapidly becoming beside themselves.

They stamped and groaned and shouted, their great mouths opened cavernously to emit the raucous sounds. Their black faces dripped and shone with sweat.

And they drank and drank, and crooned and crooned, and always they kept piling the fire higher and higher, till the small room was like a furnace, and thick with hot smoke. The sinister crimson and yellow light disclosed every latent bestiality in the black faces. The sickening smell of the close room made the whole thing seem like a devil-inspired nightmare.

"Faugh!" exclaimed Evarts suddenly. "Let's get out of this!"

It was precisely at that moment that the topmost log on the monster fire fell blazing and crackling out into the room.

The negroes scattered before it; the table cover caught from the shower of

ascending sparks, and in a moment the whole room was in flames.

Evarts and his party had started for the door, but the confusion and panic now made it impossible to make a step of headway. They fell back, as far away from the fire as they could get, and waited drawn up close to the wall of the room.

There were several sharp, shrill, negro screams, as the flame leaped and spread, and Aunt Cassy heaved her huge bulk up from her chair with a convulsed black countenance.

"A sign!" she yelled. "It am a sign, chillen! De spi'its and boogers, dey done gib we-all a sign!"

"De brack people agin' de white!" droned Rooster Sam, with his teeth bared in a fanatic snarl. "De brack agin' de white!"

"Glory! Glory!" shrieked the rau-
cous voices on all sides. "De fire am
come to burn up de white folks—yas,
suh! De fire! Glory be—glory be!
De fire am a-come!"

Evarts flung out an arm to pull first one and then another of the girls into a safer position. Quite quietly and promptly, little Tommy Norton did the same. Ramsay and Moss, cool and steady, braced themselves between the women and the seething room.

"We're all right!" came Juliet's calm voice. "Is the door blocked?"

Louise was gasping for breath in the smoky air.

"S-surely," stammered poor little Molly Davidge, clinging to Evarts, and trying to be plucky, "we aren't in any real d-danger, are we? Why don't they move and—and let us out of this awful room?"

"Because," said Ramsay, carefully wiping his glasses—he was as blind as an owl without them—"because, my dear young lady, they like a good blaze while they are about it. They consider us fuel sent straight from heaven—or hell!"

"But," quavered Molly persistently, "what harm have we done to them?"

"We've been born white, that's all!" said Evarts, between his teeth. "Look at their faces!"

And as they stared in horror at the ebony countenances pressing up about them, they saw plainly enough that not the violent, hungry flames themselves were more cruel than the hate they read there!

Evarts suddenly shouted a football order, and Moss promptly hurled himself upon the confused mass of struggling darkies, and began to shoulder his way through them.

"Follow me up, quick!" he called. "Get hold of the girls, and make the rush with me, you fellows!"

One of the negroes, with a crazy laugh, made a grab at Juliet's arm. Evarts struck him full in the face on the instant. The fellow went down like a log, striking his head against the sharp corner of the table. He lay still, with dark blood streaming out onto the dirty board floor.

In just one second the room passed from uproar to pandemonium itself.

"Oh, Lord!" muttered Ramsay, bracing himself resignedly. "Now you've done it!"

The negroes wanted blood for blood. They surrounded the white people, even forgetting the menace of the flames that now licked the ceiling of the little cabin. Only Chicken Sam sobbed and wrung his fat black hands, seeing his house burn up over his woolly head.

The now wholly maddened blacks, cursing, shrieking, and threatening, had by this time hemmed Evarts in. Molly, half fainting, was clinging to Juliet's steady arm. Louise was crying loudly and affrightedly, and did not even know that she was. Evarts, white but cool enough, fought off the murderous black hands that were clutching at him.

Charlie Moss was separated from his friend by half a dozen struggling darkies. When Ramsay tried to get by to the others, Kitty deliberately flung a cup of spirits in his face, shattering his glasses, and momentarily blinding him with the smart. She was absolutely silent, but held herself in a tense, crouching attitude, like a catamount waiting for its spring. Heart and soul, it was easy to see, she was with the negroes, and against the white party.

Suddenly, above the tumult, sounded a single sharp command:

"Stop!"

It was the cunjyer woman, who had risen from her seat, and stood before them, hunched and stooping, but grimly impressive. With upraised hand, she dominated the uproar, and the negroes hushed each other to listen to what she had to say.

"Nebber min' de white trash!" she said, speaking slowly and in a deep voice. "Git water fo' dat fire, you-all lazy niggers, you! An' open de do's an' winders. Now you-all go right along, an' do's I say! I's Ma'm Myra, I is, an' you-all niggers is plumb boun' to 'bey me! Skedaddle now!"

There was no question about this being the voice of authority. Clearly Ma'm Myra was used to being obeyed, and expected to be so now. The very assurance of her tone and manner did the trick. The tension wavered and lifted. The danger was not past, but the sorely tried Evartston people saw hope glimmer ahead of them.

The negroes, inherently born to be ruled, and that roughly, began to obey the witch blindly. Some one opened the door, and a merciful current of pure air rushed into the foul little place. Several men were now helping Chicken Sam to put out the fire. Two others were assisting the now conscious man that Evarts had knocked down to sit up.

Slowly, cautiously, protected by the authoritative figure of the cunjyer woman, the white people began to make a faltering progress to the outer world. The men fought down, for the women's sake, their earnest desire to make a gallant exit. Alone, they might have made a rush for it, but if the girls could be gotten out quietly, with no fuss, why, so much the better. But they chafed and grimaced as they walked with apparent nonchalance toward the door, under the savage eyes of the baffled blacks.

Suddenly there was a queer, shrill cry, like that of a wild cat; and Kitty Turley darted across the room, straight at Juliet.

Juliet's impression of what followed was very vague. She saw Kitty pick

up a small kerosene lamp which had stood on the table, and lift it high in the air above her head, as though she were about to fling it at her.

"Juliet!" cried Louise, in a tone of horror. "Oh, take care!"

Juliet closed her eyes instinctively, and put up her hands to shield her face.

At the same moment, she felt herself seized forcibly, lifted bodily in a pair of strong arms, and heard a fresh outburst of excitement. She had seen Evarts spring forward just as she flung up her hands to guard her face, but she knew that it was not he who was carrying her.

The uproar receded into the distance, as she was carried rapidly out of the heat and glare into the blessed cold and darkness of the night. The smell and feel of frost was in her nostrils, and the sound of dry twigs and withered leaves crackling under a swift foot was in her ears.

"It is all a dream—all!" she thought, as she was borne on. "In a moment I shall wake!"

For, though she had not yet opened her eyes, she knew that she was in Derry's arms.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RESCUED.

In a minute he set her down gently, and she stood there, a trifle unsteady now that the tension was over, and looked at him quietly.

He had flung away the witch woman's shawl and cloak, and was dressed as usual. The lampblack on his hands and face did not show in the starlight, but, as he leaned toward her, she could see—or thought she could—the anguish of anxiety in his dark eyes.

"I've got black stuff all over your gown!" was the first thing he said to her. "You aren't hurt, girl? You're certain sure you aren't hurt?"

"No." She smiled at him shakily in the darkness. Her thirsty eyes never left his.

He looked back at her—a long, deep look, and caught his breath.

"I didn't suppose," he said, in a low tone, "that I'd ever see you again. I didn't mean to, you know."

She started, and shrank. For a magical moment she had forgotten his abandonment of her through those blank weeks of waiting. Now she remembered that—and other things.

"I've only just found out that I'm a free man, after all," he said. "I didn't know before that Nat got well."

"I know."

She seemed only able to speak in breaths, in monosyllables. Some strength had gone out of her.

He made a quick, impatient gesture. "God knows why she didn't give me the signal right! God knows why she did it! And I suppose *she* knows! It drove me nearly mad—not to come to you." He paused, and she could hear his labored breath. In a moment he added, in a different tone: "But now—"

He stopped, and she could feel his eyes on hers, though the darkness hung between them. Love and life, and what they had to give, came close to her in that moment, and she knew it.

"Now," said Juliet very simply, "it's too late. You know that, too?"

"No! How do you mean—too late?"

He spoke quickly, roughly. She could see more plainly now that she was growing used to the dim light. She could see his eyes, and they glittered oddly, as he bent closer to her, and waited for her reply.

"You don't know," Juliet said, "that I am going to marry Mr. Evarts?"

There was a short, dead silence.

"Is that true?" he said.

"Yes."

Another pause. "I see," he said dully. "You must let me take you back to the others now. To—him. They are out all right now; I can hear their voices. Listen!"

Somebody crying hysterically was approaching. Juliet recognized the high and plaintive note as belonging to Molly Davidge. Accompanying it came the deeper echo of masculine voices on the night air.

"Oh!" Juliet started, filled with compunction for a moment. "I have

been cowardly to forget them! How did they get out, I wonder?"

He shrugged his shoulders in the dimness.

"They were all right. The men were equal to that much, I reckon. There wasn't any danger, just at the last there. But Kitty would have hurt *you*, I reckon, if I hadn't grabbed you up when I did."

"She recognized you, didn't she?"

"Yes, right away! *You* didn't."

"I was in a sort of daze," Juliet said simply. "I have been that way for a long time now. Things don't seem to have been real to me."

He gave a little, low exclamation, that might have been pain, or pity, or love—or all three. Then, as though he feared himself, he said hurriedly: "I'm pretty glad I got there when I did. They were right crazy, the lot of them. And you might have been hurt."

"She hates me!"

He said nothing to that.

Suddenly it seemed to Juliet that she could not bear his silence, his coldness, his aloofness. Hardly recognizing herself, she stretched out her hands to him. Her face was silver pale as she raised it toward him under the white stars.

"Don't you understand why I did it?" she said. "Can't you see why I said I would—marry—him? You had gone away—and I waited. And you didn't come—you didn't come! Though I waited for you day after day! Of course, I thought you'd gotten the signal, and—and didn't *want* to come. And I was so lonely—" Her voice broke. As she talked she felt the hopelessness of making him, of making any man understand her. "You didn't come," she repeated drearily, and fell silent.

"And now it's too late," said the man.

Then he put out his hands, and caught hers in a close, warm grip.

"I do understand!" he muttered, low and rapidly. "I reckon I do understand, girl! And, even if I didn't—I love you! It isn't too late—it can't be! People don't feel our way for nothing. It couldn't be just wasted; if it could be, there wouldn't be any sense in anything on earth! It isn't too late! Lis-

ten, now: I'll wait for you in the Under Trail to-morrow night. Come to me! Oh, my girl, come to me then, and tell me that it's not too late, and that you'll come away with me somewhere where we can be free—free together!"

"I can't—I can't!" she gasped.

"You can—and you must! You owe me that much!"

"I can't come," she said again, struggling with her own breath.

In the darkness his face came close to hers, so close that his eyes burned into her own.

"You can't—not come!" he said softly. "You can't keep away! We love each other! Hush! They are coming!"

He pressed his lips to both her hands, and suddenly melted into the shadows.

The others came stumbling and complaining through the thicket of crooked trees.

"Of all the damnable nights!" said Evarts, stopping to wipe his forehead. "All right, Juliet? I thought at first the old woman had kidnaped you!"

Juliet started. So they did not suspect!

"The—old—woman—saved my life!" she said, steadily enough.

"Where is she?" demanded Evarts. "There was something fishy about her, in my opinion."

"I haven't the least idea," returned Juliet truthfully.

"Just dropped you, and cleared out?" "That's all."

Louise was still crying. She clung to Juliet, unaccountable, unwontedly demonstrative.

"That horrible girl!" she sobbed. "I never dreamed—I believe she honestly meant to hurt you, Juliet! Oh, what a fool I've been." She had a fresh burst of weeping. "What a fool I've been!"

"And what a fool you are, Louise!" interrupted her brother curtly. "Button up your coat, and try to control yourself."

Louise still sobbed weakly, and to the undying astonishment of everybody, Tommy Norton rose to the occasion. He had done nothing very daring in the

cabin, but, as they now recalled, he had stood his ground gamely, though pale with terror, and had not tried to run away.

He now drew Louise's shaking arm inside his own, and with his free hand felt in his pocket.

"Have some?" he remarked politely. And the wretched members of the Evartston voodoo party fell, with moans of gratitude, upon the whisky flask which he produced.

Somewhat revived, they made their way down the cold and lonely trail. Halfway down they met Doctor Clement and two other men on horseback, with lanterns swinging cheerily from their saddles.

The doctor pulled up, and swore with relief when he saw them.

"All safe, eh?" he demanded irascibly. "Not a single fool missing?"

Evarts gave him a brief account of the evening.

"Better than you deserve!" was the doctor's heartless comment. "Of all the imbecile expeditions! See here, you'd all better go into Mack's and get hot drinks and a rest, before you go home."

Something moved in the bushes near them.

Molly, whose nerves were shaken, gave a little shriek.

"Now what?" exclaimed Ramsay resignedly. "A fresh attack?"

Into the circle of lantern light at this point walked a little old colored woman, with a mild, wrinkled face, and a snowy turban. She was bundled up in shawls and neckerchiefs and comforters and scarfs, but she looked cold and weary and depressed.

"Kin you-all tell me de way to de ho'se of a nigger man called Sam?" she asked, in a soft, minor drawl.

"Chicken Sam?" queried half a dozen voices in varying keys.

"Yas, suh. Dere's a cunjur meetin' up dar."

"The Lord knows there is!" exclaimed Evarts, with heartfelt fervor.

The little old negress looked at him in meek surprise.

"Yas, suh, I wuz gwine dar, but Ah

met a gen'leman, a white gen'leman, early in de ebenin', an' he sent me fo' mile outer mah way. Ah cert'nly wants to git dar, suh, 'case——"

A sudden idea had struck Evarts, and he broke in.

"What is your name, my good woman?" he demanded.

"I'se called Myra, suh—Ma'm Myra," rejoined she, very humbly.

So this was the true witcher woman! They stared at each other's startled faces in the lantern light.

"Then who was the other one?" exclaimed Molly, who was feeling better.

"Some impostor!" said Evarts. "It's no matter now, anyway. We're out of it, all right."

The doctor threw back his rough head, and laughed loud and long at the stars. When he had finished laughing he happened to glance at Juliet, and upon her white face there was just the ghost of a sympathetic smile.

Ma'm Myra was redirected in her pilgrimage to the voodoo gathering, and the homeward-toiling party proceeded on its way.

Down in the warm and brightly lighted shack of Mackanerny, Louise exclaimed loudly, as she brushed off Juliet's tan coat.

"It's covered with black, smoochy stuff!" she cried. "And, oh, Juliet, do look at your hands!"

Juliet's pale, tired face flamed scarlet as she glanced down. Her white fingers held in lampblack the print of Derry's lips.

"The motor is ready, girls—do hurry up!" announced Evarts' weary voice from the door.

"Molly," said Louise sarcastically, as they started for home, "I hope you had as *wonderful* an evening as you expected!"

CHAPTER XXX.

MADNESS.

All that night, and all the next day, Juliet fought the devils and the wolves in the wilderness of her own soul. The sight of Derry's eyes, the sound of his voice, the sense of his dear nearness,

had broken down her resistance. She was again at sea, again despairing—above all, she was again filled with the madness of her heart's need of him.

She prayed for strength to be true to Craig, she lashed and scourged her own tenderness till she writhed, she called up the still faces of Duty and of Peace to stand between her and her temptation. For it was a temptation—not the less, but the more because she was a good woman, pure and upright in intent as well as in life. To her, the sin of loving another man than he whom she was pledged to marry was a deep one; yet it appeared to her a greater wrong to consider the cowardly breaking of her engagement. Such things were done by the weaklings of the world, the beings who had not strength to be unhappy. Was she one of those creatures, so exceedingly despised throughout her sane and strong and candid life?

There is no need to follow her through those stormy hours that left her at sundown that Thursday night ruthlessly, insanely determined to see Derry again.

She told herself that it was because she wanted to say good-by to him forever; but her leaping pulses and the hot, unshed tears that burned her eyelids told her in return that she was going because she must see him once more—because she must touch his hand, and hear him speak, or she should die.

She pleaded a headache, and stayed in her room all day. While the rest were dressing for dinner, she put on a riding habit, went out to the stables, and had the dappled mare saddled.

The sun had set in a bank of black clouds, and it was quite dark when she rode down the mountainside, going on the turf so that the mare's hoofs should make no noise. She knew that it would not occur to the stablemen to report her visit there, nor her departure with the mare, unless they were questioned. And Miss Evarts and Louise had promised not to disturb her until some time during the evening after dinner. So she was safe, in all probability, for at least a couple of hours. And by that time she would be back.

What manner of night it was through which she rode Juliet could never afterward recall. To her it was a great black vacuum filled with nothing—notting but her own madness. The winds that surged about her spoke with the voice of her desire; the sky above her head was only the roof of her aching heart.

She had often ridden the dappled mare before, but the little beast had never found her rider so reckless. Juliet did not press the horse, only let her out to the full of the gallant creature's will; and the frost-rimmed hedges sped by in the half light like dreams, and the little mare curvetted around corners and galloped down pebbly stretches, with never a word of remonstrance from the human being on her back.

It was with no sentient determination nor definite planning that the girl chose the upper trail past Chicken Sam's house, that led to Crazy Run, and thence to the subterranean passageway. She had ridden a good deal over the Ridge in the past few weeks, and was familiar with the used and unused bridle paths, so she did not expect to have any difficulty in finding her way. She did not want to go by Evarts' new road—the "main trail," as it was still called. The thought of meeting Mackanerny or any of the men who knew her by sight was dreadful to her—not, to be honest, because she felt consciously ashamed of what she was doing, but because their limited minds might put upon her presence a vulgar construction. Ah! The very thought was like a blow upon the passionate delicacy of the sentiment she guarded so jealously.

So it was the same path taken by the voodoo party the night before which it now suited her to follow, and upon which she accordingly started. She knew that Crazy Run flowed on its headlong course a scant half mile above Sam's cabin. There she knew, too, was the Shutter, the great, movable rock resting in its natural socket, so nicely balanced that a child's hand could swing it in and out of the position which masked the upper entrance to the Under Trail.

She rode on and up in a feverish dream, unconscious of time, not even feeling the cold that enveloped her. The flame in her heart burned out every secondary thing, every lighter thought, every lesser sensation.

It was with a shock that she suddenly found herself misled by the darkness, off the familiar trail. She was obviously, disconcertingly lost! She was by this time too accustomed to the mountains to feel any terror, but the discovery startled her out of her introspective and passionately absorbed mood, like a cold needle bath. She found herself obliged to consider her whereabouts, and the next thing which it was best for her to do, and the necessity was very good for her.

With the arousing of her practical sense, and the clearing of the mists of mad impulse, came the return both of her sense of humor and her natural daring. It was at the promptings of both that she suddenly decided to ride to the Turleys' house and ask her way to the Shutter! She began to see, by this time, that she must be on that little by-path that zigzagged off from the main trail below—the scene of that long-ago meeting with Derry. Somewhere, a few hundred yards farther on, the grim Turley domicile should be situated, if her bump of location was not nonexistent. And it was to that unfriendly roof beneath which she had passed one of the least agreeable hours of her life that she was now directing her horse!

She laughed aloud as she dwelt on this proposition, and her own laugh, echoing freshly among the shadows and the twisted trees, did her good. She patted the mare's neck, and the willing little creature quickened her step and danced a bit, to show that the returning interest was appreciated.

It was only a few minutes before she saw a light which she knew must be burning in the house where, once upon a time, she had nearly lost her life. She urged the mare forward, feeling that sudden impulse toward a lighted window which the wayfarer nearly always experiences on dark, cold nights.

The light was a feeble, unwelcoming

one, but it served to make her dismount, tie her mare to a tree, and boldly approach the door. Her knock brought prompt answer. There was the sound of a chair pushed back, a heavy step, and—she found herself almost immediately smiling up into Dan Turley's lean and grim old face, as he scowled anxiously at her in the doorway.

"Better luck this time than on my last visit!" she said audaciously. Indeed, she felt utterly reckless and foolhardy, and scarcely knew herself. "How are you, Mr. Turley?"

Dan frowned at her more deeply still, and growled: "It's the nursin' gyurl!" So, she recalled, he had greeted her once before.

"Yes." She smiled, as she had smiled then.

Looking past him, she could see Nat Mooney sitting by the table—that same, cumbrous table that she remembered with so much distressing clearness. "The whole brood together!" she thought, with a sort of inward grimace. What an unsavory crowd it was, to be sure!

Turley was regarding her, without graciousness, it is true, but also, for the moment, without resentment. Indeed, he appeared to be at present remarkably sane.

"What are you-all doin' hyar?" he demanded gruffly.

"I've lost my way!" Juliet explained, with entire cheerfulness. "Oh, is that you, Mr. Mooney? Good evening! You see, I hoped to get to the Shutter as early in the evening as possible. Can you direct me?"

"What do you-all wan' ter go to the Shutter fo'?" said Dan Turley suspiciously. "What do you-all want of the Shutter at this time o' night?"

"I've heard it's a point of interest," remarked Juliet recklessly. "I'm not a revenue officer, you know!" she added—and she laughed.

Nat Mooney openly sneered, half lifting his big head as he sat heavily by the table.

"Thought you knew the way there mighty well," he said insolently.

"I beg your pardon?" said Juliet po-

litely, suddenly turning blank eyes in his direction.

"I say—I thought—most people knew the way there," he mumbled, making his retreat with a bad grace.

"Oh! Well, I don't know it, as it happens! Oh, by the bye, where's your daughter, Mr. Turley?"

To hear her, one would have thought that Juliet and Kitty were friends and neighbors accustomed to the constant interchange of calls.

"We're waitin' fo' her!" old Dan grunted unwillingly. "We-all ain' had our supper yet!"

"That's too bad!" Juliet suddenly was conscious of an agreeable smell. "I hoped she would give me a cup of coffee. Perhaps you will?"

Turley did not move; his eyes were dull and lackluster. It was doubtful if he had even heard her request. But Nat rose sullenly, and took the steaming coffeepot from the fire. As he did so, he gave vent to a muttered exclamation.

"See here, Dan," he called, with a startled note in his voice. "There's a letter stickin' up over the fireplace fer you. Did you know that, eh?"

"Letter?" Dan regarded him without understanding. "What letter?"

"A letter for you here. Say, you're no more nutty than I am when you don't like! What d'you put on that 'where-am-I' look fer?"

"I ain't had no letter," muttered the old man.

"Well, you come on in, an' look at this. It's got yer name on it, all right."

Turley walked heavily and slowly across the room, and took the little folded note in his long, bony fingers. The two men bent over it together.

"Why—it's from Kitty!" said Nat, in a queer voice.

Turley nodded, with a dumfounded look. Then they read it.

Juliet, accustomed to reading faces, moved slowly inside the room as she watched them read. She could not guess the contents of the note, but it was something potential in its effects upon these two men. What mischief,

she asked herself, was that little beast Kitty up to now?

Suddenly, there was a choked oath from Nat, and old Dan, with a deep, harsh cry of grief and despair, dropped into a chair by the table, and hid his face in his gaunt old arms.

Juliet walked straight to the table, and caught up the note without ceremony. Nat made a clumsy pass at it, as though to prevent her seeing it, but she brushed him aside with an impatient gesture. It was only afterward that it dawned upon her that she had done rather an awful thing in reading the letter without permission. At the time, she merely held it closer to the light, and read it through.

It was written in Kitty's blotted, unformed handwriting:

I reckon you'll feel pretty bad, dad, but there's nothing else for me to do now. I've gone away to Derry—

Juliet's eyes felt strange; the words swam before them, and she was so dizzy that she had to put one hand upon the table to keep from falling. In a moment she was able to read on, while Dan Turley sobbed in his chair, and Nat watched her read, with the blank, suffering eyes of some beaten dog.

—You never rightly knew what was between us, though I reckon you were sometimes mighty close to guessing, and I know you never liked him. Well, he's treated me badly, dad—the same as Joe Rainor treated the Crew girl last spring—and now it's too late. He wants to desert me, but I'll never let him live to do that. I'll marry him, or I'll kill him. Anyhow, I've gone to him. I'd ask you to come and back me up with Derry, only I've been trouble enough to you already, old dad, and I reckon this makes you well rid of your good-for-nothing KITTEN.

P. S.—I'm going to Derry at the Shutter to-night.

Juliet stood staring, horrified, at the paper in her hand, and as she stood and stared, she heard Nat Mooney say in a slow, dreary, puzzled tone: "She don't say anythin' about me. She don't mention my name even, does she? We was to have been married, an' she don't even mention my name!"

The mists and horror in Juliet's brain were suddenly dried by a flame of in-

dignation. She knew, absolutely and irrefutably, that in word and spirit the whole letter was false—cruelly, wickedly false. For some reason that she could not fathom, Kitty had done this thing.

"The little hypocrite!" she breathed, sick with disgust and anger. "The diabolical, unwomanly little hypocrite!"

Dan Turley caught the one word, and raised his heaving shoulders from his arms. His eyes were red and wild.

"Hypocrite! That he is!" he groaned. "Curse him! Curse him! To ruin mah gyurl!—the proudest-hearted young thing on the Ridge! Him to drag her down! Curse him! Ah cert'nly curse him this night!"

"But, good heavens!" exclaimed Juliet vehemently, "you can't really believe that he—he treated your daughter dishonorably?"

"She says so," said the old man doggedly. "She says so, an' what Kitty says goes!"

It was the old loyal formula. Juliet recalled with a sense of bafflement and despair the blind faith of the father. There was, of course, as she might have remembered—no use in trying to make him see reason where Kitty was concerned.

"But," she persisted, as gently as she could, "don't you think it's very unlikely that that sort of thing could have gone on for a very long time without your suspecting? Don't you think—"

"'Fore he went away, two months ago, they were together a whole lot," said Turley. He talked in a curiously toneless, expressionless voice; his mouth trembled and twitched. "They were together a whole lot," he repeated.

"An' mebbe," put in Nat Mooney, thrusting forward his puffy face, that had suddenly become tragic, "mebbe he never went away at all. Mebbe he's been hidin' in the hill all the while, an' her seein' him! Mebbe—"

"Gawd blast him!" interrupted the old man. He spoke in a great, shaking voice. It had the husky tremolo of a very ancient vox humana stop.

So far he was peculiarly controlled and contained. Juliet, however, waited

for the storm to break. She knew that any moment this abnormal composure was likely to crack under some mental convulsion. And if Dan Turley went to pieces now, in his really great trouble and anxiety, it would probably be for life. She had a passing flash of indignation to spare for the daughter who could take such risks with her father's reason, and all for some shabby trick!

She tried to talk with him quietly about the matter. "In any case," she said, in her most reasonable, soothing tone, "she does not want you to do anything. You can only wait."

But even as she spoke she had her misgivings. She felt very certain that he would not wait.

Dan Turley heaved his big, angular framework upright.

"That's what she does want!" he exclaimed, with the first glint of unrestrained excitement showing for a second in his eye. "She wants me to go an' force him to marry her—the deceivin' devil!"

"She does not say so!" remonstrated Juliet, but her heart sank. She had a sense of trying to ward off a hurricane with a gossamer screen.

"No, ma'am—she don't say so. But she wants it!" said old Turley simply. She whom he adored had called him—not with words but with intent—and he obeyed the call. There was something impressive and terrible in his figure as he stood there, fighting dumbly with his madness and his pain, clinging in blind, agonized obstinacy to the one great thing shouting in his head—his daughter needed him; he must somehow contrive to keep himself sane and steady enough to go to her.

"I'm a-goin'," he said. "I'm a-goin' to the Shutter to-night!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

IMPRISONED.

"You are going to the Shutter!" exclaimed Juliet. How could she ward off this new danger?

"Yes. And that's another thing, though Ah didn't think of it fuhest off.

She wouldn't have tol' me where she was a-goin', if she hadn't wanted me to come!" —

"I'm comin', too," said Nat suddenly.

"You-all keep outen this!" growled the old man threateningly. "You-all ain' her father!"

"No," said Nat Mooney obstinately. "But I was a-goin' to marry her. I guess I've some rights."

"You fool, yo' keep out!" repeated Turley angrily. "Ah'm a-goin' to get that chap to marry huh, or shoot him dайд!"

"I ain't," said Nat Mooney, and his loose lips opened in a grin of hate. "I'm a-goin' ter get a bunch' of the boys an' string him up—that's what I'm a-goin' to do!"

Juliet started forward.

"You're going to do what?" she gasped.

"Git my pals, and string him up for stealin' my gal."

Juliet remembered now that she had heard of Nat Mooney's cronies—the riffraff of the valley, the young negroes and low white trash of the hills, men who had been discharged from the road workings or the hotel, all the scum, and all the discards of the community. Drunkards, idlers, and cheap rascals, they were despised by reputable folk, but they were not without power of an unsavory sort. Collectively, they represented mob feeling in its primitive form. They might do Derry serious harm, and by force of numbers and the plea of the ostensible provocation, they might later get the condonement of popular feeling.

"But you can't," she faltered. "It's illegal —"

Nat grinned at her, that same loose-mouthed grin; and cold vengeance looked out of his eyes. The man was beside himself with his wrong.

"Ever hear of lynch law?" he said. "I reckon a feller that's lost his girl that way kin call out lynch law to help him out!"

A very short time ago Juliet had been mad, obsessed by her own selfish longing to see Derry, lost to every sane and calm consideration. Probably nothing

could have so completely sobered her as this rapid awakening to the very real fact of his danger. She felt vaguely ashamed of the emotional intoxication which had brought her on this mad night ride to the hills, but she had not time for even so much self-analysis. She was earnestly, unaffectedly thankful that she had come, whatever had inspired her coming. Never mind her madness, and the disloyal thoughts of which she had been guilty; she was here, and once again it was her task to carry to the man she loved the news of his imminent peril. She must go to him in the Trail, even as she had planned—but under what different circumstances! —and she must in some way save him from Dan Turley's bullet and Nat Mooney's lynching party.

So busily was her mind working that she hardly noticed the two men talking together, until she heard Turley say:

"Mebbe she won't let yo' hang him."

"We shan't ask her!" said Nat viciously. "Look-a-here, Dan. Me and Kitty's bin keepin' company, off and on, fer a long while—a darned long while. She's twisted me round her little finger, same as she's twisted you. But she ain't goin' to do it no more! Not now she's got—she's got another feller!"

Juliet was vaguely surprised to see the pain in the man's look. There was the ring of sincere if venomous emotion in his voice.

"Well, Nat," said old Turley slowly. "Ah reckon—mebbe—that much is your right. Ah ain' interferin'. But it'll be in front of her. Don't yo' go forgittin' that—it'll be in front of her."

Juliet shrank a little as she listened. "In front of her!" Of *her*! For the moment she had forgotten that part of it. Derry and Kitty were together, and she of all persons was proposing to go to them!

Then, in the instantaneous way that a great crisis or emergency makes one grasp a situation, she saw that in spite of that fact, possibly because of that, she must help Derry—could even save him if need be. Quickly and confidently now she made her plans for what she had to do. Time enough for doubts

and for silly self-consciousness when the peril should be past.

She looked from one to the other of the two men, and laughed. "And what," she said, "do you expect me to be doing, while you two are going about hanging people, or shooting them—whichever of you gets there first?"

Turley looked at her without really seeing her. "Ah don' cyar what you-all do," he muttered. "Ah'm through with you-all, now this has come on me."

"Don't you be such a fool as to let that gal out of here," said Nat sharply. "She'll warn him."

"Warn him! Why should I warn him?" Juliet stared at him.

Nat shook his head stubbornly. "You look out for her," he said to Dan. "She's sweet on him."

She laughed again—with open scorn this time. "What cowards you both are!" she exclaimed. "You're both afraid to face him unless you can take him by surprise."

"He's took mah darter from me," said Dan Turley heavily. "If he don' wan' to marry her, he'll have to pay for it."

"Are you going to make him marry the girl at the point of a gun?" demanded Juliet contemptuously. "Is that what your daughter wants, do you think?"

"She wants him," said the old man, with finality. "If she didn' wan' to marry him, she wouldn' have gone away, an' lef' that letter fo' me. Ah'm a-goin' to see as she gets what she wants." But he looked almost vacant as he spoke.

"Well," suggested Juliet, who contrived through all this to look entirely unconcerned, "she won't get what she wants if Mr. Mooney has his way as well. You can't marry a man and hang him too, you know."

In the bloodshot old eyes began to stir a vague trouble and bewilderment. He was grappling, grappling with something that puzzled and distressed him. He did not know what to do, nor what to think. Kitty wanted him to go and make Derry marry her; that much had been clear to him a second ago; what was this woman talking to him for—

persistent, cruelly talking, trying to shake his blind determination to do what Kitty wished? He looked with a dull resentment toward Nat Mooney.

"That's so," he murmured. "You-all cyan't hang him, Nat; Kitty wants to marry him."

"Oh, say," said Nat, in disgust and wrath, "you're going nutty again, Dan. You were as sane as I am a minute ago. You know that skunk deserves to be hung, an' I'm going to see that he is. As for Kitty—"

"Yes, Nat," cried old Dan eagerly, "there's Kitty! How' about Kitty? There's huh honor, Nat—"

"She's got to take care of her own honor now!" said Nat brutally. "I ain't got it to look out for no longer, I guess. An' it don't look like she'd been so awful tender of it, at that!"

Turley turned on him with clenched fists and a wild look.

Juliet thought for a moment that he was going to attack Mooney then and there.

"You-all kin take that back!" he cried. "Mah gyurl don' need no one to defen' huh honor 'ceptin' me!"

"All right," said Nat. "Then let me get the boys and fix him. I reckon Kitty'll get over it."

And he gave an odd snarl as he spoke.

"I think," said Juliet quickly, but how her heart beat, "that Mr. Mooney is quite right. If the man is as bad as you believe, he ought to die. Why, whatever the circumstances are, you oughtn't to want your daughter to marry him, to be tied to him for life! Why don't you keep out of it, Mr. Turley, and wait for your daughter to come back to you here, when—when it is all over?"

If only she could get Dan to give up his project of going to the Shutter! She would let Nat start out, and get his gang of ruffians together, his infamous lynching party, and lock Dan Turley up for the night in his own house. She was sure that she could do it; anyway, she could delay him for a good while. Then she could get to the lower entrance of the Under Trail herself in time to put Derry on his guard before any possibility of the arrival of the

lynching party. She knew that there was no danger of a real lynching; but that Derry would be roughly handled was very likely.

"Don't you pay no attention to her, Dan!" warned Nat Mooney. "She's tricky as they make 'em—didn't she knock you out last September? Don't you stay behind, anyhow. Didn't you say yourself that you'd shoot him?"

"If he didn't marry Kitty. Yes, Ah said Ah'd shoot him."

Before the look of pain and mental struggle on the lined face Nat swore huskily.

"Clean gone off his nut!" he growled. "Come on with me, Dan. We'll go an' see about it, anyhow."

Juliet could see that Dan Turley was slipping, slipping into the bottomless sea of madness. He was clinging pitifully to the few things that were yet sound and solid to him, but he was going fast. If she could have him in her hands for fifteen minutes, she could, with her knowledge of failing minds, make him utterly give up his journey of revenge. It was a fight between Nat Mooney and herself, and she knew that the odds were all against her.

"See here!" she said coolly, facing the man whose life she had once fought for. "Aren't you taking rather long chances, to engineer a lawless affair of this sort, while Mr. Evarts is still looking for you to arrest you?"

"He's dropped that," said Nat, as coolly as herself.

"It wouldn't stay dropped very long if he heard about this sort of thing! You know it's Mr. Evarts' desire to get this whole neighborhood to be law-keeping and prosperous. A crazy thing of the kind that you're starting on tonight would get a lot of people into trouble."

"Look here, ma'am," said Nat Mooney, and, to her surprise, he did not this time speak insolently. "This here's my affair. It's my business. Every feller's got one thing in his life that's his business an' no one else's; this is mine. If Mr. Evarts ain't got sense enough to see it that way—if he ain't man enough to see it that way—why, I've just got

to take my chances. Now, ma'am, you've kept us back just about long enough. I know, an' half the boys know, that you're sweet on Derry Blake. Well, this is the time you ain't goin' to do any funny business on the side, and keep him from what's comin' to him. Will you stay here quietly, and let Dan an' me atten' to this our own way without makin' no fuss?"

"I certainly will not!" returned Juliet, white with anger.

"All right!" said Nat calmly.

They stood facing each other. Juliet, with a high color and a light in her eyes, walked toward the door. She heard Nat say "Just as you like," without expression, and was off her guard. So that it was an entire surprise, for which she was not braced, when she found herself seized from behind, her arms swiftly and not too gently tied across her back, and flung into a chair.

She was a prisoner!

It had happened so swiftly, that she was still dazed, as she lay, rather than sat there, and stared up at him with horrified eyes.

As she saw the sneer on the man's mouth, her horror changed to a devouring rage.

Dan Turley was looking stupidly on. He grimed faintly, as though he knew that he ought to be pleased by her subjection, but he was clearly growing more and more confused. It would be remarkable if the last thread of reason did not snap entirely before long.

Neither of the men made any comment, as she lay there panting in the chair. Nat shrugged his shoulders, as though to indicate that for the time being, at least, she was disposed of, and then turned to talk in an inaudible tone to the old man. The latter listened docilely, but without much understanding. He was sinking every moment deeper into the marsh of his bewilderment. Only when Kitty's name was mentioned did he show any light of intelligence.

"All right," Juliet heard him say, in a dull sort of time, as though he were blindly obeying a command which he did not clearly comprehend. "Ah'll walk along the road—an' wait fo' you-

all. How long you reckon yo'll be, eh?" He looked at Nat anxiously.

"I'll be about an hour, gettin' the boys together," said Nat. "Say, will you see that she's locked in, eh? Can you be trusted that fer, I wonder?"

"Mr. Turley!" cried Juliet eagerly.

"Cyan' yo' keep still?" shouted old Dan, in sudden tremulous rage, that died as suddenly. "Ah don' feel mahself, Nat!" he muttered piteously. "Ah reckon Ah wan' Kitty. Where is Kitty?"

Nat was already out of the door. He shouted back: "Come on, Dan! I don't dare to leave you alone with her—she might get you to let her go!"

"We ain' got no hawses," objected Dan, with a brief gleam of clarity. He peered timidly into the darkness.

"Yours is ready in the shed," cried Nat. "And I"—he laughed roughly—"I'll take *hers*!"

"Mr. Turley!" pleaded Juliet again, trying to attract his attention. He did not appear to hear her, but, muttering to himself, went slowly out of the house, and shut and locked the door. Juliet heard the sound of trampling hoofs in the shed outside; then, listening anxiously, she caught the echo of two horses going off down the trail. They had taken the mare as well as Turley's horse, and left her tied up there for God knew how long! She was more helpless than she had ever been in any situation before in all her life.

For a moment utterly despairing and disheartened, she sank back in the chair and closed her eyes. Then she pulled herself together again, and sat up, thinking hard. She looked at the clock ticking in the silence from the shelf. Half past seven! And she had an hour. That was what Nat had said. An hour!

An hour in which to get free from these ropes that tied her, and get out of this lonely, locked house, and make her way on foot to the Under Trail! There was no use in screaming; no one could possibly be near enough to hear, and she would only waste her strength. It must all be done in an hour!

She glanced in conjecture and dismay! She looked at the lamp; could she burn the ropes through against the

hot glass? Or could she manage to light matches and do it that way? And even if she did get her hands free, could she ever succeed in climbing up to the high-set windows? There was no piece of furniture in the room tall enough to reach those windows, and even if she should get as far as one of the altitudinous sills, how could she ever get down to the ground on the other side? But there might be trees—and, anyway, she must try. She must burn the ropes sufficiently to get her hands free, and then she must move the chest of drawers and get one of the huge chairs onto the top of it. Could she possibly do it?

But she had lost seven minutes now, and Derry was in danger! In a panic of haste and determination she set to work. She did not stop to look at the clock again, as she backed against the table, and groped with her pinioned hands for the matches. It was with her feverish heartbeats, and with the pulse of pain in her burned wrists, that she counted the time.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN TIME.

In the still heart of the mountain a man and a girl were talking that night, in the light of one wavering candle stuck on a ledge of rock.

"Kitty," the man said gently, "what's the use? We've kind of played at love, we two, but it's never been the real thing, never gone anyways deep. You know that, kid?"

"I don't!" said Kitty. "I don't know anything of the kind! I've cared for you, all right!"

She was sitting hunched up on the floor of the cavernous space, which was one of a hundred rock chambers in the Under Trail. There was no wrap about her; there was nothing, as usual, on her head, and her black hair was disordered. But she was beautiful. Haggard and somewhat forlorn as she crouched there, she was beautiful. Derry, standing with folded arms and watching her, was forced to acknowledge to himself the fact of her beauty,

though it was a beauty which now left him cold.

"I tell you," she repeated defiantly, "I care for you!"

"Ah—don't!" he said, and frowned.

Kitty smiled a twisted smile.

"Don't care for you?" she demanded.

"No. At least, don't do that, either, of course. But—don't talk like that."

She relapsed into her sullen mood once more.

"It's true," she said.

Derry shook his head. "I'll not believe it, Kitty."

"You don't want to believe it!" she flashed.

"Hush, you silly child! I tell you, I don't believe it. *And I wouldn't want to, anyhow. You've flirted a right lot with me, but so you have with plenty of other fellows—and no harm done!*" He smiled at her with entire friendliness. "There's nothing between you and me, Kitten—nothing *big*."

"Nothing big!" she repeated, low and angrily. "Nothing like the feeling you and your precious nurse have for each other!"

His face flushed, and at the same time hardened. A curious look, distant and displeased, came into his eyes.

"I'd rather," he said, "that you didn't talk about her."

Kitty flung open her arms with a queer, wild motion. She lifted her dark eyes, big and tragic, to his face.

"That's it!" she moaned. "You see—that's it! You can't bear even to have me speak of her. And yet—I love you a sight more than she does."

"Kitty!"

"I won't stop! I tell you, I do love you more. Girls like me can love more than any—*good* woman, as they call themselves—because we don't care about anything on earth except our love. We haven't any high moral nonsense to live up to; we just love."

She stopped, panting.

"Kitty," said Derry quietly, in quite a matter-of-fact tone, "I reckon you don't mean a quarter of what you say; but even at that you know I don't like to listen to it. Come, kid, won't you part friends? We've liked each other—"

He paused, with a softened look. "We've loved each other!" she cried. "No, Kitten; never."

"I love you," said Kitty flatly. "And you used to—love me!"

"No," he said gently. And he shook his head. "I don't reckon that I ever loved you, Kitty, girl. But—you're a right sweet kitten when you like to be."

For the life of him Derry Blake could not have kept that caressing inflection out of his voice.

Kitty bent forward, vivified by a gleam of hope.

"Derry," she whispered passionately, "you'll not send me back? You'll let me stay with you?"

"Why, of course I won't let you stay, Kitty!" he exclaimed vigorously, matter-of-fact enough at this suggestion. "You're out of your head, my dear girl, to think of such a thing for a moment. Say good-by, like a good little woman, and go home."

Kitty had begun to get slowly upon her feet. There was a soft and dangerous glint in her eye.

"Will you kiss me good-by?" she said.

Derry laughed outright, and shook his head.

"Not if I know it," he said. "I'll pay you that compliment, my dear; I wouldn't dare!"

Kitty paused upon her knees and looked up at him. Then she dropped her arms at her sides with a gesture of finality.

"I can't go back, anyhow," she said.

"Don't be silly! You can, and you will. In fact, you're going right now!"

"I can't go home," she said once more, with the queer little triumphant glance that was so characteristic of certain moods of hers.

"Kitty!" he exclaimed, eying her suspiciously. "What deviltry have you been up to now?" For he knew her pretty well!

Kneeling there in the flickering candle light, Kitty spoke.

"I left a note for dad," she said. "I told him that I had come to you."

"The devil you did!" Derry stared at her. "What did you do that for?"

"I wanted to settle it," said she.

"Settle it! Settle what?"

"I wanted you to have to—take me." He shook his head hopelessly.

"Kitten, you're crazy, or I am! Speak up! What did you say in your note to your father?"

"I told him," said Kitty, "that things had gone too far—that it was too late—that you'd treated me badly—that I was going to marry you, or—kill you. That's all."

There was a silence.

"You little fiend!" said the man, at last. He was quite white, and seemed bewildered. "That's all!" Yes, that's quite all, I should say! You little fiend!"

Suddenly, as she said nothing, he laughed—a furious, low laugh.

"And how long," he said, "do you calculate it will take your father to get here with a gun?"

"He won't shoot you, you see," said Kitty, without agitation, "unless I tell him you've refused to marry me."

"I see." Derry regarded her. "Well, you'd better go and get into a safe place, because there's liable to be some tall shooting round here before long."

"Then you do refuse?" she cried.

"Oh, I refuse all right," he said contemptuously. "I wouldn't marry you now, to save myself from the stake, much less a fighting chance with a gun!" The usually slanting eyebrows were level black.

"Derry, would it be such an awful thing to marry me?"

"I think," he said mercilessly, "that to marry a girl like you, who's lied about me, and tricked me, and tried her best to saddle me with one of the few rotten acts I've never happened to commit, would be about the most awful thing going! No, thanks, I'll go to hell by some quicker and straighter road than that!"

"Well, you'll find it!" cried Kitty, rather wildly. "You'll find it sooner than you think!"

Derry turned all at once, for his quick ears, used to the echoes of the underworld, had heard something.

"What's that?" he exclaimed sharply. The subterranean passages were sud-

denly full of footsteps, coming nearer and nearer to them, echoing from every side.

"Dad!" declared Kitty, with a thrill in her voice.

"Rot!" said her companion. "If that's your father he's got a regiment with him!"

Then Kitty herself blanched with apprehension, for there was no question about it—there were many men instead of one coming to them along the rocky ways of the Under Trail.

"It's a gang!" muttered Derry. He turned on Kitty with a scornful smile on his white lips. "More of your work?"

"No!" she gasped, with absolute sincerity and anguish. "I swear—I swear—I don't know what it means!"

"Don't swear anything!" he said. "I wouldn't believe you, anyway!"

"Derry! You don't think I'd trap you like this?"

"I think you *have* trapped me—lying about me to your father, and—"

"Derry, you'll have to forgive me for that—oh, you must, you must! It was the only way I could think of! I thought I could get you that way, and I loved you!"

He laughed.

"You're brutal!" she moaned.

"I reckon I am." He drew a long breath. "And I don't think I ever wanted to be right down brutal to a woman before. But trapped like a rat in a hole like this—" He had caught up his rifle.

Suddenly Kitty raised her hand. "I don't understand!" she exclaimed under her breath. "Listen! There are more steps—"

Derry listened, too.

"From the opposite direction!" he declared, wondering.

"Who on earth—" muttered Kitty.

The single footsteps became clearer, more hurried. The multiple tread still approached gradually.

"Look out! Some one's just behind you!" cried Kitty, in a frightened but guarded tone.

Derry wheeled, and—Juliet, panting

and exhausted, caught at his arm to steady herself.

"Am I in time?" she gasped. "The others haven't gotten here yet?"

Kitty was looking at her as though she were an apparition. Indeed, with her golden hair loosened and floating in a golden nimbus about her death-white face, she looked less like a human woman than a spirit or a dream.

"You're all right!" said Derry, smiling at her reassuringly, and supporting her with a strong arm about her shoulders. "It's all right!"

Love, faith, gratitude, protection, a hundred little half tones of understanding vibrated in his voice. And she clung to him.

As she did so, he caught sight of her wrists deeply marked with raw red burns, freshly made.

"Good Heaven! What have you done to yourself?" he exclaimed in a white flame of horror at the sight. She hid her hands, and shook her head. Not now—she could not tell him about it now! She was tense with listening.

"Hark!" cried Kitty, lifting her hand, for all at once the other, multiple steps were upon them.

They saw old Dan's face, troubled and startled, staring at them. The next moment Nat Mooney and his friends poured into the rock chamber where they stood.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MADNESS OF DAN TURLEY.

They pushed past old Dan, and surged forward—the fierce, stupid faces and menacing sticks showing like visions in a nightmare. Kitty screamed, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"What's the trouble, boys?" said Derry easily. He had drawn his arm from Juliet's shoulder, and was facing them with nonchalant surprise.

"You hound!" shouted Nat Mooney, advancing upon him. "You've done as you liked long enough; you've played your game of 'Gentleman Derry,' as the boys used to call you, *long enough!* You can't go on with that high-handed

business and go scot-free!" Nat was raving in a rage of long-pent-up jealousy and resentment. "It was always you!" he went wildly on. "Your way with the women, an' your quickness with a gun, an' your luck at cards, and—always you! An' I'm sick of it! I'm sick of it, I tell you, an' yer 'gentleman's ways'! Steal my girl, would you? Take her away from me under my nose, when I'd won her back—when," cried Nat, "I thought I'd won her back again—!"

"You're in wrong, Nat," said Derry directly, and without anger. "I haven't stolen your girl, and I haven't done you a single bad turn—unless you count that hole in you"—he grinned—"and what's a little matter like that between gentlemen?"

"I ain't a gentleman!" stormed Nat, "nor I don't lay claim to be! You've acted like a dirty sneak, an' we've come to see you pay for it. The boys won't stand for actions like that," blustered Nat.

Then old Dan advanced, unsteady and suddenly infirm. He raised one great, shaking hand, and began to curse Derry horridly. The phrases rolled with a dreadful solemnity from his lips, and even the listening men, hardened to blasphemy, shuddered to hear him. His invective was broken in upon unexpectedly by a clear voice.

"Why, it's Mr. Turley!" said Juliet, coming forward out of the shadows. "I didn't tell you, Mr. Turley, but your daughter and I had agreed to come down here to see—Mr. Blake. He—he's been showing us the cave and the underground trails."

Dan and Nat stared at her as though she were a ghost risen from the grave. There was a long minute of silence. Then one of the men laughed.

"Don't look like an abduction exactly, Dan!" he remarked.

"They didn't fergit the chapy-rone, anyhow!" chuckled a second.

Out of the ripple of derision that spread through that impromptu "lynching party," primed for tragedy and punishment, another of them spoke up: "What does the girl say?"

Kitty was white and shaking. She hesitated just a second, as she looked from Derry to Juliet, and then let her glance stray terror-stricken to Nat and the other men.

"Dad has—made a—mistake!" she faltered. "There's nothing wrong—nothing! It's just as she said."

Nat stood motionless, with a dropped jaw, looking at her. The old man's face was working horribly. For the first time in his life he faced his daughter in a fury of revolt.

"An' yo'r letter?" he cried. "That letter you-all writ me?"

"What letter?" said Kitty, trying to bluff it out, though she cast a frightened glance at Derry. "What letter, dad?"

"That letter," shouted her father wildly, and the true, strange glow of mania was in his eyes at last; "that letter—that—you-all writ me—about him!" he choked and clutched at the air. "The letter," he gasped; "that proves what we come hyar fo'!"

"There isn't any letter," said Juliet calmly. "If you mean that silly note that was in your house, it was just a—joke."

"Where is it?" he demanded, his voice rising to a scream.

"Where is it?" repeated Nat, in a strained tone.

"I did not think it was worth keeping," said Juliet, smiling at him, "so I tore it up!"

A little thing will demolish a rotten dam, and the pent-up waters broke then. The rock chamber was a place of chaos, filled with the fury of Dan Turley's delirium. The tight rein which he had been keeping upon himself all that evening had now snapped, and he raved horribly but insanely, and tried over and over again to get at Derry. Three of the men held him, and Kitty, terrified by the sudden breakdown, knelt at his side, trying to cling to him as he fought and struggled.

Nat stood by passively—stunned, one might say, by some deep reaction of feeling.

Once he looked at Derry in a dull sort of way.

"Mebbe—what she said—ain't true?" he said.

"No, Nat," said Derry, meeting his eyes squarely. "It isn't true."

Nat nodded, twice, very slowly, and relapsed into his abstracted, apathetic silence.

"See here!" broke in one of the men. "If you're Derry Blake, ain't you wanted by Ted Kipley and the other boys, over to Carkham?"

"I reckon I am," said Derry calmly. "This is the chap I plugged right here. Go ahead, and lodge your complaint, Nat!"

"I guess," said Nat slowly, "I don't want to lodge no complaint."

"Oh, go on, and make your charge!" urged Derry. "I'll come peaceful, see if I don't!"

"No," said Nat, in the same dull way, "I guess I don't want to. I guess," he put his hand up to his forehead, and rubbed away the perspiration in a pre-occupied fashion, "I guess—I don't want to do much of anything—any more."

He shuffled off by himself, and they heard his heavy, dragging step going farther and farther away along the rock passages of the Under Trail.

"Say," said one of the men in an astonished undertone, "he's all broke up!"

"Ain't the man he was," muttered another. "I think the gal's treated him rotten bad, if you ask me!"

He looked accusingly at Kitty as he spoke, but she paid no attention. She was still kneeling beside her father, talking to him tenderly. The old man was quieter now, but the light of insanity was fixed forever in his eyes. He babbled and muttered to himself, and was mercifully unconscious of his whereabouts, as of the curious eyes that watched him.

Juliet went over to the tragic little group, and laid her hand on Kitty's shoulder. The girl looked up with startled eyes, but for the first time there was no resentment in her gaze as it met that of the nurse.

"Do you reckon," she asked pitifully, "that he's gone clean crazy for keeps, Miss Gray?"

"Why, I hope not," said Juliet gently. "He's been under a great strain to-night, you know, and—"

"It's my fault," said Kitty. "I reckon it's all my fault!"

"Don't you think," Juliet ventured, "that he should be taken care of? Somewhere, you know, where he can have doctors, and—"

Kitty sprang upright with an a-righted look, and an outstretched arm, as though to shield her father.

"Oh, don't let them take him away!" she prayed in terror. "Let me try to take care of him myself! Oh, let me! Let me! I'll never do anything else in my whole life, if you'll let me do that. He's all I have now. He's all I have!"

She broke down then, and for the first time since that night when they helped to get Derry away, she burst out sobbing.

"We'll see how he is to-morrow," said Juliet compassionately. "He should go home now."

She looked inquiringly toward the men who had been holding Dan; they muttered that they would see to him.

"And I'll go with you," Juliet said, as a matter of course. "I am a nurse."

Derry picked up his gun and slouch hat without a word, and went, too. And so the grim little procession made its way back through the Under Trail.

"How did you hurt your hands?" was the first thing Derry said to Juliet, as they walked through the dark and echoing passageways.

"Oh," she was confused and troubled by the question; "they tied me up—"

"Tied you up! Where?"

"In Dan Turley's cottage."

"What were you doing there?" he demanded in astonishment.

She colored faintly. "I had lost my way. I stopped there to ask directions."

"Lost your way!"

"I was—I was looking for a short cut to—the Shutter!"

"You were coming to me, after all!" He turned, and met her eyes in the lantern-rayed darkness.

She hurried on: "I read Kitty's note. And they were afraid I would warn you."

"You were coming to me!" he repeated. Then: "They didn't *hurt* you?"

"Just tied me up with ropes and things!" She smiled feebly.

"And how did you get away? Tell me about your hands, dear."

"I got some matches and burned the ropes through. That's all."

He smothered an exclamation, and, unseen by any one else, he took one hand gently in his, and touched his lips to the red scar.

"For me!" he whispered.

"For myself," she answered, with a gentle look.

"Because of me," he said.

"It's the same thing!" declared Juliet softly. "It doesn't hurt now, you know—much."

• And they walked on in silence.

They all went together to the Turley house. Dan was exhausted by this time, and was quite willing to go to bed quietly. Kitty sat by his bedside, looking years older in an hour. She accepted Juliet's help and comfort quite unresponsively, as though it were a matter that concerned her not at all. Derry had left them at the door of the house, and no one referred to him.

It was another hour still before the nurse felt that all was well for the time being, and that she could safely leave Kitty and her tragic charge. To her surprise, just as she was going, Kitty looked up with dark rings around her eyes, and said: "Get one of the boys to find Nat."

"You want him?"

"Yes. I'm afraid, sitting here by myself. No!" as Juliet started to speak. "I don't want you. I don't want any one in particular, except—except—I reckon I'd like to have Nat around."

"I'll see if one of them can find him." Juliet turned to the door.

"See here!" said Kitty suddenly. "If I keep him here, will you take advantage of it to send over to-morrow and arrest him?"

"Nat Mooney?"

"Yes. I suppose you could arrest him on a couple of charges, if you'd a mind to." Something of the old resentment sounded in Kitty's voice.

Juliet shook her head.

"No," she said quietly. "I don't want to arrest him particularly."

Kitty's sharp, dark eyes slipped to the other girl's wrists.

"Did dad or he—do that?" she asked.

"No," said Juliet. "I did it myself getting away."

"I didn't know," said Kitty. "I've known dad to do some—some funny things like that when he got mad."

Juliet shuddered. They looked down together upon the lined and aged face. The wickedness of it had been smoothed out by sleep—or was it the veils of madness that had fallen before it, hiding the marks of the man's dark life, and leaving only his pitiful great age and weakness for the eyes to rest upon?

"I reckon," said Kitty, "he's my job after this. You'll let me keep him—for a while—and take care of him?"

"I have nothing to do with it," Juliet reminded her. "I suppose, if he is not violent, you will be allowed to care for him yourself, if you choose to. It will be a terrible task."

"I'm through with everything else pretty much," said Kitty. "As for Derry—"

She hesitated; then went dreamily on: "I certainly was fond of Derry. I'd have taken about all the chances there are to—get him. I reckon I did take a good many, for that matter. But somehow all that seems mighty far away now. And Derry never set much store by me—excepting to flirt with. You'll find he'll do *that* all his life. See here, you *aren't* going to arrest Nat for what he did to you?"

"No. I think he's been punished enough," said Juliet. "He loves you, and you've been unkind to him. And I don't think he'll do much harm to any one after this. You've broken him, Kitty." It was the first time she had ever called the girl by her first name.

"Nat," said Kitty, with one of her quaint flashes of instinctive wisdom, "is a mighty bad man, but a right true dog."

"I'll try to have him found for you," said Juliet simply.

She was at the door when Kitty called to her:

"I just want to tell you before you go—I've hated you, and I've wanted to kill you—tried to kill you more than once, as you know. Well—I want to say—that I think you're the finest sport I ever knew. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"GOOD-BY!"

As she left the Turley house she saw, to her amazement, Nat Mooney skulking in the underbrush at the side of the house. His eyes were fixed hungrily upon the light that streamed out from the room where Kitty sat watching over her father.

"A right true dog!" thought Juliet, recalling what Kitty had said of him. He shrank out of the light, as she came out, but she stopped short, and called him softly:

"Nat Mooney!"

After a second, he came sullenly out from the shadows, but he did not look at her.

"She wants you," said Juliet, and walked on.

"Say," called Nat after her, and there was a shamed note in his voice, "your horse is tied to a tree out there."

"Thanks!" said Juliet, smiling a little in the darkness.

But she was so weary and so despondent, that she could hardly hold her head up, as she untied the mare, and prepared for her ride back to Evartston. She felt that she had lived a long, long lifetime since she left it. Time had a way of losing all its wonted measure on Liberty Ridge.

Her hand was on the pommel, preparatory to mounting; when Derry's voice close to her said: "Wait a minute, dear."

The little word, intimate and tender, brought a rush of tears to her tired eyes. Yielding to an impulse, she allowed herself to lean against him for just a moment, under cover of the darkness—then drew away swiftly, shocked by her own weakness.

"I mustn't—you mustn't!" she whis-

pered, with a catch in her breath. "Let me go now!"

He was silent for a short space; then he burst out: "See here! You know I am not a fine sort of person, nor high-minded, nor anything like that. I'm just a man—a common, ordinary, everyday man; but I've lived straight and clean in my way—in spite of being a blackguard sometimes! I don't know how to put what I've got to say, but—I *feel* it right enough, and I know it's *right!* You are going to marry that fellow Evarts, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"In spite of loving me?"

"You have no right—" she was beginning desperately, but he cut in:

"Yes, I have the right. I'll say it again, too. You might as well hear it, as long as it's true. You love me, but in spite of loving me you're going to marry another man. Isn't that so?"

"I'm going to marry Mr. Evarts—yes!" she returned, almost sternly.

"And you think that's right? You think that's decent?"

The light from the Turleys' cabin streamed full on her face. It was quivering with pain.

"Don't you see," she pleaded, "there's so much in life, besides—just—love!"

"Besides just love!" "Just love!" Yes? Go on!"

"There's faithfulness, and kindness, and patience," said Juliet. "There's making people happy in good, gentle ways—"

"And being miserably unhappy yourself!" he broke in.

"No; I shan't be unhappy—not truly unhappy. I shall be happy in the best way."

"Oh, will you?"

"Yes," said she bravely, "I shall be happy in doing what I know is right."

"Oh, you dear, plucky, beautiful thing!" he almost groaned. "You're so wise and so sweet and so true—and such a baby! Listen to me: Do you really think, on the level, that you can be half so much of a woman without love as you can with it?"

"I don't think anything about it," she said steadily, though her lips trembled.

"I know I've given my word to Craig Evarts."

"And what are you going to do," he persisted ruthlessly, "when you miss me? You're bound to miss me. You've only seen me four times, but you'll miss me every hour of your life, as I shall miss you. What shall you do, when you think of me, and when you dream—and you will dream—of what your life would have been—long, good years, spent with some one who loved you better than anything in the world, and whom you loved the same—what will you do when you begin to make pictures in your head out of what might have been?"

"Stop!" she said sharply. "You shall not say those things to me! I've given my word, and—I'm going to keep it."

He regarded her with a sort of tender rage.

"There's nothing to do with you," he said. "You'll marry him whatever happens, whether or no—if I let you!"

"If you let me!"

"Yes; it's up to me, I see. Well, I bet you I save you in spite of yourself! You dearest and most wrong-headed woman in the world, will you let me kiss you—once—for good-by?"

She leaned toward him silently, choking back her tears; and for a long, long minute the world was blotted out, and there was neither time nor place.

"Good-by!" said Juliet faintly.

And he released her, and put her up into the saddle. He did not speak at all.

When she looked back, he was still standing, bareheaded, in the patch of light. Then she could not see him for her tears, and, turning away, she rode home through the night.

A sort of misty drizzle was in the air, a sense of tears, she said to herself, as she rode down the trail. Everything about her was touched with the same chill heaviness, as though the last warmth and blitheness of the earth had departed for all time.

As she approached Mack's cottage, she saw that he was standing at the door.

She was obliged to ride slowly, just there, and he recognized her perforce.

"Miss Gray!" he exclaimed, scowling. "They're fair daft about ye over at the big house!"

"Oh, I am sorry they were anxious," Juliet said, pulling up the mare. "Did Mr. Evarts telephone?"

"I'm thinkin' he'll hev been telephonin' every place on the Ridge," rapped out the Scotchman. He regarded her with something of his old suspicion. "It seems, mem, that ye did not set their minds at rest aboot yer comin'!"

"It was a very sudden decision," said Juliet hurriedly. She was feeling sick and weary. All this seemed so ignoble and futile somehow! She had said good-by to Derry, and she was going back to take up her duty again. What irony it was that she should be met by this swarm of trivial annoyances! She was only just learning that Life will not allow us to do anything in the grand style. We may not bear ourselves in any of our tragedies nor dramas with the dignity and the fitness that we would like. We pass from deathbeds to dinner, and have to explain away the elements in our greatest renunciations.

"I told Meester Evarts, mem," said Mackanerny, "that the lads had told me of seein' ye walkin' with Derry Blake an' the Turley pair, like old friends."

"Oh, did you?" said Juliet, looking at him. "That was very nice of you! I suppose then that they are not so anxious as they were?"

"I'm thinkin'," said Mack, "that Meester Evarts was not understandin' why ye were there at all." He added, reluctantly and sourly: "Twas my duty to tell him, mem."

"Certainly," said Juliet pleasantly. "Suppose you telephone him now that I am on my way home. Good night!"

Mack went into the house, and she rode on.

On the way home she let herself think for the last time of what Liberty Ridge had meant to her. She had found such strange, new, wonderful things here—such strength, such freedom of heart. She knew that, though it was here she had met her deepest and most everlast-

ing sorrow in the loss of Derry, it was here, too, that she had found herself. Dimly, as she rode in the faint chill drizzle, she marveled at the why and wherefore of it. Derry had said once that if this—their meeting and loving—had meant nothing, there was no sense in anything in the world. Somehow, in this minute, she knew that he was wrong. Not what we *do*, but what we *are*, counts in the sum of things. Not our pain nor our joy is important to ourselves, but our capacity for the one and the other.

She found Evartson still fluttered over her disappearance. Her brief explanation that old Turley had had a bad attack, and that she had been with him and his daughter, doing what she could, satisfied Aunt Alicia and Louise; but Craig still appeared ill at ease.

Just as she was starting wearily to go to her room, he stopped her.

"Juliet, I—I don't altogether like your flying over the hills like this!" he said, somewhat awkwardly. "It—well, to tell you the truth, it doesn't look well. And the men talk."

She raised her head with a flash of spirit to answer him, but she was too weary for argument. Besides, she felt vaguely but poignantly that she was in the wrong, and Craig in the right.

"Very well," she said tonelessly. "I shan't ever want to go there again, anyway."

Evarts hesitated a moment, fidgeting with the leather fringe of a mantel scarf. At last he burst out:

"Hang it all, Juliet—I might as well be frank with you! That rotten tramp, Mooney, came to me once, with a cock-and-bull story about your having had some sort of love affair with the fellow Blake. Of course," added Evarts hastily and sincerely, "I just kicked him out, for a lying, low-minded brute! But he's a noisome worm. He may have talked to others who—who wouldn't know what a liar he was. When I turned on him about it, he said so many stupid things about *my* being afraid of his killing me, and *your* being afraid of his talking about you, that—that—well," finished Evarts, rather shame-

facedly, "that was really why I didn't push the assault charge against him, you know. Just a sporting proposition. I didn't want us to seem intimidated."

"I see." Juliet was thoughtful. Evarts was astonished that she took it so quietly, but in reality she was merely thinking of Mooney, and his reptile faculty for stinging. Well, poor serpent, his fangs were drawn now. "He has always hated me," she went on, simply enough. "I'm sorry, though, that you should have been troubled about it, Craig."

"Why, good Lord, Juliet!" the young man exclaimed indignantly. "You don't think a beast like that could really trouble me, do you? I wouldn't insult you by even wondering how he got such a notion. All I meant was—" he paused; then he said, coloring with quite a boyish shyness: "Are you very keen to wait till spring for our wedding, Juliet?"

"No," she returned. If there had been lurking at the back of her brain any last hope of breaking her engagement at the eleventh hour it had died now, killed by Craig's magnanimity and trust. "When do you want to have it?"

"I thought," ventured Evarts, "that—you like this place so much—and Aunt Alicia was speaking of it to-day—and then no one could ever say a word, you know. Why couldn't we be married here—before Christmas?"

Juliet's heart seemed to stop. So soon!

But she recovered herself, and answered gently:

"Let it be here, then, Craig—and before Christmas, if you like."

CHAPTER XXXV.

JULIET'S WEDDING EVE.

Juliet's wedding day was set for the nineteenth of December. On the seventeenth it began to snow heavily, and when it cleared off on the morning of the eighteenth, the world was white and glistening under the sun.

"All nature looks bridal, my love!" said Aunt Alicia sentimentally.

It was going to be a very small and simple wedding; they were all agreed upon that. Only the old Thanksgiving house party and one or two more of Craig's college friends had come. Juliet had no family connections close enough to invite, so the affair would be really and strictly quiet.

Juliet was very beautiful in these days, but though she smiled with a ready sweetness upon every one, she did not look like a happy bride. And sometimes Miss Alicia, looking at her with her old, wise eyes, had misgiving.

But preparations went forward merrily, and on the eighteenth there was nothing left to do but wait twenty-four hours more for the wedding day itself.

Louise was entirely reconciled to the marriage now—partly, no doubt, because her own affair was going well. Oddly enough, it was Tommy himself who had won over the Evarts family. He was still anaemic, and still addicted to gambling and extravagance, but Craig had admitted that "he wasn't a bad little fellow, you know, if you didn't have to see too much of him." And Miss Evarts had decided that "Louise would be the better for any occupation—even that of looking out for that little whippersnapper."

So Louise was to be allowed to marry her Tommy, if not with her people's blessing, at least with their tolerant consent. Evarts had promised to settle something on her, and Miss Alicia agreed that she should have as much of her own money as "they all thought would be good for her." This moral and material support sufficiently cheered poor Louise—who had been sadly chastened by the voodoo experience—to make her quite nice and sisterly to Juliet.

Perhaps the most pathetic member of the wedding party—for Juliet was too brave to need any one's pity—was Molly Davidge. She had come down for the wedding, of course—what girl would miss the lamentable comfort of assisting at the interment of her own hopes? But she looked quite wistful, poor child, and had grown noticeably thinner since Craig's wedding day had been set. She

was not a bad sort, was little Molly, and it is a question if, in her infantile freshness and kittenishness, she was not better suited to Craig's temperament than the graver, larger-natured girl whom he was so shortly to make his wife.

"I think," Louise remarked privately to her aunt, "that if Juliet were struck by lightning, Craig would marry Molly Davidge to-morrow."

"Such a supposition," snorted Miss Evarts, "only shows your common blood!"

During the afternoon of the eighteenth came a rather startling telephone call from Doctor Clement.

Miss Gray was needed immediately on Liberty Ridge. Yes, Kitty Turley. She had hurt herself, trying to control her father, and must be seen to at once. No; Craig need not bring her himself. The doctor's man was at the hotel drug store just below Evartston, having some prescriptions made up. He would stop for Miss Gray. Very sorry, but nothing else to do. Good-by.

The doctor here rang off, and Evarts swore roundly that Juliet should not go one step.

Of course she said she would go. "It's a call to duty," she averred.

"Thank Heaven," said Evarts, "that it is the last call to that sort of duty that you will ever have! The last call to duty that you had, you stayed a week!"

Juliet smiled faintly, and went upstairs to put on her furs.

Miss Alicia, sitting in a rocking-chair, held forth forcibly on the question. "So like James Clement," said she, rocking violently, "to send for a woman professionally on her wedding eve! He's 'nothing but a medical degree incarnate, without a bit of humanity!'

By the time Juliet was ready, the doctor's sleigh was at the door. The driver, a fur cap pulled over his ears, touched the brim of it as she got in, but did not turn his face toward her.

"Warm enough?" cried Miss Alicia from the door.

"Quite!" Juliet smiled her good-bys.

"Tell Clement with my compliments that the next time I get married I'll see that it's not in his neighborhood!"

And Evarts, still grumbling, went back to where Molly Davidge was waiting eagerly for the boon of five minutes' chat with him.

The sleigh started off with much jingling. As Juliet turned to look at the driver more closely, she was surprised to see that he was Nat Mooney.

"Why, I didn't know you were driving for Doctor Clement!" she exclaimed.

"I do it sometimes," was Nat's only rejoinder.

He whipped up the rawboned horse, and they skimmed over the sunlit snow with the wind in their faces.

A wonderful day it was—ah, a divine day! But Juliet Gray closed her eyes not to see so much brightness and beauty, so much splendor of white and gold and sapphire skies. Her heart was too sick to be touched by the beauties of nature. To-morrow was her wedding day.

Fighting off the despair that was shutting in so heavily upon her, she asked Nat some questions about Kitty's hurt. He answered stupidly, as though he did not know much about it.

Only once did he show any animation.

"Me and Kitty's goin' to be married come the New Year," he said. "She needs some one to help her with Dan."

And Juliet told him heartily and sincerely that she was glad to hear it.

Liberty Ridge was a place of beauty when they got to it—all silver and diamond ice, pearly snow and lacy frost. The shadows on the snow were all the tones of shells and summer clouds. Such a fairy world—with the fresh, pure wind blowing over it, and the snow-filled valley lying so far below, like a dream!

To her surprise, Juliet found Kitty up and about. The doctor had been gone some time. Kitty had indeed bruised her shoulder, and the contusions would probably be improved by the compresses of cold water and alcohol that Juliet applied. But she was not in any way badly hurt, and Juliet felt more and more mystified as to the reason for the doctor's peremptory and inopportune summons of her.

Kitty was a very different creature from the Kitty of the past—gentler, less intense—even, in spite of her life of anxiety, less tragic. She spoke quietly and kindly of Nat, and seemed to have crushed down all her old fiery malice of spirit toward those who stood in the way of her desires. She had not reformed, she had simply altered.

"I still hate you," she explained to Juliet, quite calmly and easily, "but I'm going to do you a good turn yet—because I want to show you that I can be as good a sport as you. You are a right fine loser, and I like you for it—though you took—him—away from me. Do you want to see dad?"

When she spoke of her unfortunate father her voice became infinitely yearning and tender. Poor, sinful old Turley, after his years of blind adoration of his daughter, was reaping his reward in her present passionate devotion.

Juliet bowed her head without speaking, and went into the inner room. Dan was in a silent, vacant mood. He was weak that day, and had to be in bed, and he plucked at his bedclothes as he chattered to himself. He did not know her in the least, and Juliet was inconsequently glad that he could not know that she whom he detested and had once tried to kill was still well and safe.

"Good-by," said Kitty, when it was time for Juliet to go. "They tell me you are to be married to-morrow. Is that so?"

"Yes, it is so," said Juliet, looking at her with her brave and sad blue eyes. "Will you wish me—contentment?"

"No!" said Kitty quickly. "I will wish you—life! Life!" She flung her arms wide. "Go," she said, "to—your marriage."

Juliet was puzzled, for there was a solemn note in the rich voice.

She got into the sleigh, and when she turned to wave farewell, Kitty was still standing with outstretched arms. She gave to Juliet a fleeting, singular impression of a living cross.

Under the gold and sapphire of the clear December sky, the horse trotted

fast and faster under stealthy urging. But it was not toward Evartston that he trotted, but toward the other trail and Battlebrook.

Suddenly Juliet realized the fact, and started up, puzzled and a little frightened.

"Why—why—where are we going?" she exclaimed, in a startled tone.

The bells jingled and jangled in wild merriment, as the big gray horse plunged forward under another flicker of the whip.

She turned to look at the man seated in the sleigh beside her. His coat col-

lar was turned up, and the ear lappets of his cap turned down, but—she knew him!

Even as she gasped out a sudden cry, he brought his eager, handsome face close to hers. He was warmly flushed, and the dark brows slanted dangerously as he laughed into her eyes.

"I told you, dear, that I should save you in spite of yourself!" said Derry, and the horse dashed onward down the snow-packed trail. "I'm going to carry you away by force—and if you don't like it, you can spend the rest of your life telling me so!"

THE END.

Roy Norton's latest novel, "The Cross of Gold," will be published serially in the POPULAR, beginning with the first May issue, on sale April 7th.



CARTER GETS A COMPLIMENT

LAST summer Representative Charles D. Carter, of Oklahoma, who has a lot of Indian blood in his veins, mauled and manhandled a clerk in a store because he thought the seller of goods had been insolent to his daughter. As a result of feeling the force of the legislative fist, the clerk sued Carter for ten thousand dollars.

Shortly after the institution of the suit, a friend met Carter on the street and asked him what he thought of the matter.

"I am very much like the old negro whose children asked him for ten dollars," replied Carter. "I haven't got the money, but I thanks them for the compliment."



A SERMON BY TELEGRAPH

ON one occasion Archbishop Ireland was scheduled to preach a sermon in Philadelphia. The correspondent of a Baltimore newspaper called on him in the afternoon and explained that he would like to have an outline of the sermon so that he might mail it to his paper instead of telegraphing it, as he would have to do if he waited until the sermon had been delivered.

"That would be impossible," declared the archbishop.

"Well, it will be a great hardship to me and an unnecessary expense for my paper in disseminating what you have to say," argued the reporter.

The eminent divine looked very thoughtful for a few moments, and then reached his decision.

"Very well," he agreed. "I will give you some idea of what I am going to say."

Thereupon he closed the door and preached the reporter a sermon lasting one hour and a quarter.

Then the reporter, judging the value of the talk from a news standpoint, went to his office and wrote it all down in one hundred and fifty words.

D r i f t e d

By J. Edward Hungerford

SINCE you hit th' trail, ol'-timer—since you cashed in on th' game,

This yere outfit seems forsaken—somethin' gone that's hard t' name;
Lots uh chaps have rolled their blankets—hit th' trail fer God-knows-where,
An' uh co'se we missed 'em might'ly with a sigh or two t' spare;
But with you it's dif'rent, hombre, seems yout kinda stood alone,
Fer somehow, we kain't replace yuh since yuh hiked fer parts unknown;
Don't know what it is, ol' feller—kain't jes' name th' reason *why*,
But th' Bar X seems deserted since the day you said good-by.

When we congregate at evenin', an' our cigaroots are lit;
When th' back log starts t' splutter, an' th' vagrant shadders flit;
When th' sand owls git t' hootin' down along ol' Brushwood Creek;
When th' Happy Family's gathered fer a conflag—so t' speak;
When ol' Weary gits his fiddle, an' strikes up a soulful lay,
Then somehow we git t' dreamin' uh them tunes *you* used t' play;
Ah, it's then we miss yuh, comrade, from yore ol', familiar place,
An' 'u'd give a thousand dollars jes' t' glimpse yore homely face.

When it come t' bustin' bronchos you was shore th' Bar X hope,
An' no cow-pinch on th' Big Horn could out twirl yuh with a rope;
You was ace-high on th' round-up an' th' night line, too, ol' pal,
You was expert brandin' dogies, or around a hoss corral;
You was handv with yore pop-gum, though you never drawed a bead
On no human lest you had to, fer "live peaceful" was yore creed;
When you "pinked" that low-down greaser, you was fightin' fer yore life.
Then yuh didn't stop him, hombre, till he'd got *you* with his knife.

* * * *

*Somewhere up among th' star-herds, out beyond th' Great Divide,
There's an ol' cow-puncher driftin' that the angels greet with pride.
An' at nighttime when we're herdin', me an' all th' Bar X boys,
Kinda seems we hear th' music of his gentle, soothin' voice;
Comin' faint like from th' distance, sorter wafted on th' breeze,
Floatin' aimless, jes' from nowhere, whispered kinda by th' trees;
We have strained our ears t' listen, but kin ketch no single word,
Though we'd swear a voice was pleadin' with the restless, millin' herd.*

The Infernal Machine

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "The Pirates," "When Jack Comes Home from Sea," Etc.

This is where the ship's boy, an avid devourer of dime novels, comes face to face with a diabolical plot in real life, and decides that it's up to him to "save the ship" and be a real "hero"

WHEN you have been hauled out of your bunk by the collar and hustled out on deck to scour brasswork in your watch below, you are apt to feel a lively resentment toward your assailant; and when this assailant is a black-bearded skipper with a large vocabulary of "cuss words," and a fluency of expression equal to that of an auctioneer—and, again, when such assault occurs just as you have reached the exciting point in the story you are reading, where the heroic hero is rushing to stop the clockwork of an infernal machine contrived for the undoing of the heroine, your resentment—particularly if you are nineteen, and romantic—is likely to approach in force the feelings of His Satanic Majesty when in juxtaposition with the blessed, purified, and sanctified water placed in fonts at cathedral doors.

And so I hated Captain Holcolm. His shadow had darkened the door of my room in the forward house which I shared with a fellow "boy" of the other watch; my book had been wrenched from my hand, and my ears, my heart, and my soul had been scarified by his strictures.

"What's this?" he yelled, as he examined his find. "'Silent Sleuth's Strategy; or, the Infernal Machine of the Barrators.'" Then he tossed the paper-covered book over the lee rail. "Fine," he continued derisively; "fine reading for a growing boy. Where'd you get that trash?"

"Got it in Rio, sir," I answered sulkily.

"What do you read that kind of stuff for?" he demanded.

"I like to read, sir," I said, "and I read what I can get."

"Read something worth while," he retorted. "There's a library aft, with good reading in it. Just ask me, and I'll give you books—good books."

I had sampled that library. It was furnished the ship by one of the Seamen's Missions, and contained good books, but not interesting books. I did not draw upon it; instead, I nursed my dislike for Captain Holcolm, and dreamed out the solution of the story he had interrupted—but not to my satisfaction.

Part of the story—a sea story, by the way—involved the villainy of a captain, who, besides killing the beautiful heroine, intended to sink his ship for the insurance money. And in imagination I conceived of Captain Holcolm as possessing the attributes of this scoundrel. Why not? Had he not pulled me from my bunk, thrown away my book, sworn at me, and given me hypocritical advice? Most certainly he was a scoundrel, and, being a clean-souled boy I hated him as I hated sin.

Yet I might have lived down my dislike and suspicion of him, but for an incident that happened after we reached New York; for I was fair-minded, unspoiled as yet by injustice from my fellow men, and able to forgive and forget. And it was because of

these attributes of character that I held to that ship, and worked hard and faithfully at discharging and taking in cargo—work which no sailor likes. It was toward the last when the incident occurred.

The mate, Mr. Bushnell, was a kindly man and a seaman, and as far as I could judge at the time, a competent man at cargo work, but for some reason, connected perhaps with Captain Holcolm's villainous mind, there was constant trouble between them over the stowage.

The captain criticized the mate, and often descended into the hold, to dictate and correct, to order heavy boxes and cases shifted to other positions, and to embarrass and aggravate us all. The result was that the cargo really was badly stowed, and there was a positive breach between the skipper and the mate that would have resulted in the mate's quitting had there been another ship in port for him or another mate for Captain Holcolm.

As it was, Mr. Bushnell held on, and we loaded the ship. And on the last day in port I applied for liberty and money. The captain could not consistently refuse, for I had worked hard, and there was money due me. He gave it to me—one lonely dollar—and told me to be on board at four in the afternoon, when the last bale, box, and package would be stowed, and the tug alongside to tow us to sea.

I promised and started. I had only one object in view, for, being a New York boy, sight-seeing had little of interest for me. What I wanted was a watch. I knew a place in Front Street where a watch could be bought for a dollar, and on a previous shore jaunt with empty pockets had priced and handled the wonderful thing. All my life I had wanted a watch, and now was my chance. The salesman gravely informed me as he wound it up that it would keep time, and that I need not be ashamed of its cheapness, because thousands of wealthy men carried that kind of a watch. I joyously paid him, and fondled my purchase, holding it to my ear to enjoy its musical clicking; then,

as I saw Captain Holcolm emerge from a rear room carrying a square package, I hastily hid it in my pocket.

"What are you doing here?" he asked sternly and reprovingly.

"Nothing, sir," I answered, in confusion, not caring to admit that I had expended my last cent on a watch—about as much use to a sailor as a spare pump. "I was just looking around, sir," I added.

"Well, get aboard. And take this box with you. You come in handy, for I've other things to attend to. Handle this box carefully, and don't let it strike anything—don't jar it. Give it to the steward, and tell him to place it, right side up, on my bed. Carry it right side up yourself. D'you hear? On with you now, and get aboard."

"Yes, sir," I answered, and took the box in my hand. It was rather heavy, and I held it carefully, as instructed, right side up. But as I reached the head of the dock where the ship lay, I obeyed an impulse born of my reading, my information, and my dislike and suspicion of Captain Holcolm. I held it to my ear. Sure enough, I heard a rhythmical ticking.

An infernal machine, I thought at once. I was right; my intuitive suspicions of the man were confirmed. Infernal machines all had clockwork attached which, at the right moment, would discharge the explosive and blow a hole in the side or the bottom of the ship. Captain Holcolm was assuredly villainous enough to blow up his ship, and get his reward from the owners, who would collect the insurance. I had discovered his villainy, but I could do nothing at present.

So I carried the unholy thing carefully, at arm's length, and when I had delivered it to the steward with the captain's instructions, I breathed easier. I did not know when it would go off, but for the time at least I was safe.

Given the opportunity, I would have confided in Mr. Bushnell, but there was too much confusion. The last few cases and boxes were being lowered into the hold, and Mr. Bushnell was

busy on the forecastle deck, overseeing the sending up of a fore royal. The second mate had the crew, including myself, hard at work at the task of singling up mooring lines and hauling up fenders. There was no chance of running to the mate with a hint of my suspicions, so I held them to myself.

Captain Holcolm came aboard at the last minute, and we left the dock for the long tow down the bay, and out past the lightship for the open sea. He was more than ever captious and irritable, quarreling with the mate and berating us all; but I, knowing his state of mind, roused up no combativeness, meekly accepting his expressed opinion that I was a natural-born farmer, unfit to go to sea. I bided my time, and while I worked I watched him.

Out at sea, with the tug dropped and the towline coiled up on the forward house, we quit work for the day, as daylight was necessary for the other tasks incident to a ship's departure from port. And, in the last dogwatch, with the main hatch still open, and everything in confusion while a gale of wind was rising, I saw Captain Holcolm, first having driven the two mates and all hands to the task of stowing the starboard anchor, quietly drop down the open main hatch.

In the darkness, I could not determine whether or not he carried a burden. Yet I believed that he did, and after eight bells, when I and the others of my watch had turned in, I remained awake for about an hour, listening to the voices of the workers on deck, thinking of the possibility of a sinking ship and drowning men, then crawled out into the darkness of the night, and descended the main hatch.

I could not see, only feel my way. The cargo really had been badly stowed; big boxes were balanced upon little, and there were gaping spaces that surely would call for attention should the ship be caught in a seaway. But over toward the wing was the danger point, if my suspicions were correct, and so I crawled first to starboard, to listen for the sounds of an infernal machine.

I reached the skin, overturned a big box by my weight, and fell headlong into a cavity with the box following. I struck on my head, and knew nothing more until I wakened, with a throbbing headache, a wound in my scalp, and my legs pinioned by the box.

I was thoroughly frightened, and called for help, but the only sounds that reached me, aside from those of the rising gale and sea, were the rattlings and clappings of the hatch covers and the voices of the men who were battening them down. I yelled, again and again; then, forced to help myself, I managed by a tremendous effort of strength to free my legs from the box and sit erect. But the box, wedged between others in its descent, remained above me, blocking my ascent. It was heavy; I could not dislodge it, and even had I done so, it would only have descended upon me, further crippling and hampering me.

I remained silent, while I felt my wounded head and tried to formulate a plan of escape, by crowding my way between other boxes, or by making myself heard by those on deck. And, as I thought, in the darkness and silence, there came to my ears the faint sound of a ticking—the ticking of an escapement; and my hair tingled at the roots, and my blood seemed to turn cold in my veins as I realized that I was right in my suspicions.

I strained my ears and listened, but could not learn from which direction it came. In any event it was close to me, close to the side of the ship, and when the explosion occurred, no matter whether or not the ship sank, I surely would be killed. I shouted frantically, but was not answered; the almost solid body of cases and packages, with intervening air spaces, offered a perfect nonconductor of sound.

Then, while the sweat of mental agony saturated my clothing, I hove, pushed, and struggled, tearing my finger nails against the box overhead, but could not dislodge it. I felt around me in the awful dark, seeking other boxes loose enough to move, but found none. They were tightly bound, one by an-

other, though perhaps I could have shifted any of them had I been above.

And always, in the silences, that steady ticking harrassed my soul.

How bitterly I hated Captain Holcolm, and how bitterly I blamed myself for my hardihood, can only be imagined. Had I only confided in Mr. Bushnell, this might have been avoided, for he, as first mate, had power of investigation, which would just as conclusively have resulted in the exposure of the captain. But I would have lost my credit as his discoverer and accuser, and this meant much to me—at nineteen.

I had my sheath knife strapped to my belt, and with this I attacked boxes, to this side and that, but could make little impression at first. The knife was dull, and though, with patience, I could have cut through an outer casing—what of the contents? Yet I worked, prying, whittling, and splitting, listening always for the sound of ticking, and willing to dig into that infernal machine and destroy its mechanism before it could explode—could I only find it. But I could not locate it. At times it was to the right, again to the left, above me, or beneath, yet always at a distance—a distance blocked by boxes and cases, but near enough to kill me when it exploded.

Click, click, click, click, the ticking went on, each tick marking time of my life, bringing me a fraction of a second nearer death. It was maddening; I was willing to die, if necessary, in a good cause, but not like this—not so uselessly. It seemed so incredible and unjust, that because of Captain Holcolm's scoundrelism and my own good intent, I should be a silent, unknown, and unrewarded victim of his diabolism. The explosion that would bring him his reward from the owners would eliminate me, and if he could learn of it he would only chuckle.

Yet while I thought, I worked, and soon succeeded in opening up the box to my right. I got at its contents—cloth, a tightly wrapped bale of it. My knife made little impression on it, and I gave it up. I tried another box, this

one to the left, and on opening it, found it packed with typewriters, each one padded with excelsior. This gave me hope, for I could pry them loose, leave them behind me, and ultimately force my way through the box, but again I was disappointed. The broken machines and the packing of excelsior so hampered my movements that I was forced to desist; I was crowded for room, and could not go on.

I tried another box; it was of hard wood, and it took about two hours, as I could guess, to cut into it, and expose its contents. They were canned goods of some kind, each cylindrical can as tightly bound to its neighbor as the boxes surrounding me.

I shrieked in my anger and despair; I called down curses upon the head of Holcolm, and between cursings listened to the infernal "click, click, click, click," of that devilish machine. The sound ate into my soul, and in desperation I attacked another box. It contained a sewing machine, and had I had a hammer, and room to stow the fragments, I could have worked my way through. But my sheath knife was too light, and I sat back in hopeless misery, listening to the ticking.

But this was soon drowned in other and louder noises, the creaking and groaning of the cargo as the sea increased. I could feel the pitching of the ship, and knew that there was heavy weather on deck. The box above my head slipped, crashed down a little, and stopped, wedged tighter, but contracting my moving space still more. The smashed typewriters were about me and beneath me, and as I was lurched this way and that, the broken edges cut my limbs and back. I stowed some of them back in the box, but could not rid myself of all.

Then came a new horror. Something touched my knees that was not hard, and sharp, and painful; then it touched my shoulder, and slid down to my hand, with which I involuntarily felt of it. It was soft, and furry, and as it left my hand I heard a squeak. A rat, I knew, and the cold sweat again oozed out of my pores. There came another soft

and furry object in the darkness, and I struck it away, only to feel others, and then more.

Soon there was an intermittent chorus of soft squeals about me, in the interstices of the boxes, and in those I had broken into. I still held my knife, and when I could locate the exact position of a rat I would strike. I believe that I killed several, but it did not frighten off the rest. They were of the large, Norway variety—dock rats—and had been thoroughly starved during our stay in port with an empty hold. Each was good for a cat or a small dog, and a dozen could kill a man.

I screamed again until my voice grew weak from exhaustion, and finally fainted, to awaken a century later, it seemed, with a rat gnawing at each ankle, two others at my hands, and one sitting on my chest, its small nose close to my own.

With a shriek I shook them off, and they slunk out of my reach; then, still in a cold sweat of terror, I realized an absence of the sounds of grinding boxes, and sensed that the ship was on an even keel. But in the temporary stillness came again to my ears the menacing “click, click, click, click.” When would it explode, I asked myself, in my extremity of mental and physical pain, and hoped now that it would be soon. There are ordeals that can make even a young man wish for death, and surcease from suffering not of his own making.

But this mood soon left me. The rats came back, and, steadier now, I busied myself with brushing them off, killing them with my knife, and squeezing the blood from my painful wounds; for, if I should escape this death by dynamite, I might still wish to escape death by blood poisoning. Now and then I would call out, repeating my cry for help mechanically and unfeelingly. I was in a condition of daze—not quite recovered from the faint.

At last, in answer to a shout that had no more life in it than a response from the wheel, a voice came down to me from above.

“Below, there,” it said. “Any one down there?”

It was the captain’s voice, and, looking up, I beheld a faint glow of light illuminating the edge of the box above me.

“Help,” I called. “Get me out. I’m pinned down.”

“All hands, here,” yelled the captain. “Down below, every man jack o’ you. Here’s the boy, jammed in this bad stowage. Bring a watch tackle and a couple o’ reef earings. Bring chain hooks. Bear a hand, everybody. And we thought the poor kid was overboard!”

Down they came, with clamorous voices, the captain’s loudest.

“Oh, I take it back, Mr. Bushnell,” he said. “You’re a rotten stevedore, and I wouldn’t let you stow a cargo for me again; but because you stowed this one so bad that I had to run back and anchor, and open this hatch, I’ve found this boy o’ mine. Get busy, now. Reach down and hook onto the lower edge, and overhaul that tackle. Hook the single block to that stanchion. All right, boy, we’ll have you out in a jiffy.”

With friendly, cheering oaths, the men worked, and soon the heavy box, with much creaking and splintering of wood, rose from over my head, and I stood up. They lifted me out, shaken, nerveless, and weak, and bore me to the deck, asking me if I was hurt.

“Bitten by rats,” I gasped, “and a hole in my head.”

“That’s enough,” said the captain. “Carry him aft. Rat bites are dangerous.”

I was assisted aft and down the sacred after-cabin steps, where the captain laid me out on a transom, and, with the steward’s aid, laved my bites with antiseptics, and plastered the cut in my head. Then, when the pain was gone, and the steward had departed, he leaned over me with a kindly face and asked:

“How’d you get down there, boy? I’ve worried all night, what with you overboard, as I thought, and the gale,

and the shifting cargo. How'd you ever get down there?"

I answered with a burst of sobbing. Sympathy like this from the man I had hated so much and suspected so much, robbed me of my small stock of philosophy and self-control. So, when I could speak, I said humbly:

"The infernal machine, captain. I wanted to stop it. I didn't want this ship sunk and men drowned."

"The infernal machine?" he asked. "What infernal machine?"

"It is down there yet, Captain Holcolm," I answered more firmly. "It's ticking away, and will explode. I know it, sir. I heard it, ticking in my ears all night."

"An infernal machine!" he roared. "In my cargo! I'll have to see about this. You heard it ticking? Where? Near where you were caught?"

"Captain Holcolm," I said. "You know. You placed it there yourself. I knew what it was when you gave it to me to carry aboard. I heard it ticking then, and I heard it afterward, down in the cargo."

He looked down on me with an expression of anger, alarm, and amusement; then he reached into my pocket, and pulled forth my watch.

"Where'd you get this?" he asked sternly.

"I bought it, sir," I answered, in confusion, "at the jeweler's. I forgot that I had it."

"Boy," he said, leaning back, while tears of laughter streamed down his face, "that's what you heard ticking. That's your infernal machine. And what you carried aboard from the jeweler's was the ship's chronometer. There it is, over there, still ticking."



ELBERT HUBBARD RECEIVES A CALLER

ELBERT HUBBARD, the famous founder of the Roycroft shops, was working in the field near his house one day when a prominent man drove up and called imperiously to one of the laborers:

"Come here, boy, and hold my horse!"

The "boy" did so, smiling politely. The visitor, going a little nearer to the Hubbard house, asked another worker:

"Where will I find Mr. Hubbard?"

"Oh, you want to see Mr. Hubbard?" asked the worker. "There's Mr. Hubbard, holding your horse."



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN AUTHOR

AN author is one of the noblest works of God. Full of the divine fire, packed with genius and envied by all, he goes through life, a thing of vast importance. David Belasco, the theatrical producer, is the only person who does not agree with this description of the people who write. To Mr. Belasco an author is about as important as a piece of furniture.

The first week of the production of "The Case of Becky," written by Edward Locke, Belasco, who staged the piece, gave a supper after the performance to everybody connected with the play. One of the guests was Ralph A. Graves, a dramatic critic.

The author came in late and did not notice that a seat had been reserved for him at the table. Belasco, who had been talking to Graves, pointed to the seat, and said:

"There is the place we have saved for you, Mr. ——"

He ended the sentence with a mumble and turned to Graves with the impatient remark:

"You know, I never can think of that fellow's name."

A Chat With You

YOU, perhaps, have known some one whose idea of a sociable and enjoyable "chat" was a monologue delivered by himself. Though sometimes we may have seemed so, we are not, at bottom, of that description. And to prove it let us quote from an interesting letter that F. W. Smith, of Vacaville, Cal., has been kind enough to send us. Mr. Smith opens by suggesting that we recently misquoted a line of poetry about "the proper study of mankind." If you read "An Essay on Man," by Alexander Pope, you will find that we quoted the line correctly. Mr. Smith continues by giving some excellent advice to writers of fiction. He says:

"Thou shalt tell the truth; not the naked truth necessarily, but as much as is fit to print. Do not copy the Sunday-school stories where all the good boys get sugarplums, and where the villain dies in the last chapter, but let your story be such that a man will feel cleaner, better, more courageous for having read it. If your tale is essentially tragic, let it purge the reader's mind of sordid trivialities and leave him with a fresh, clean outlook on life such as one has from a high mountain after a night of storm and thunder. Further, if you have a real story to tell, go to it; let the preacher preach and the chemist make analysis, but it is up to the storyteller to keep moving, and follow one plain road to the definite end that should be in his mind from the start. Probably every human being from fifteen to seventy-five years of age has at least one thought a day about the opposite sex, and some of these thoughts would not be fit to print. Now, of course, the novelist must tell of love, and my only admonition would be to keep clear of any sentiment that does not lead toward honorable marriage. *THE POPULAR* has no need for studies in pathology.

"Laughter is a relief from the bitterness and dreariness of life, and so I enjoy laughter and try to be merry if only to keep from depressing those about me. I have enjoyed many funny stories in

your magazine, and I like to note that what you generally give us is not the mirth of fools, but rather that of the wise man who puts on the cap and bells the better to give his little sermon on the *Via Dolorosa*."

• •

THIS seems to us sound advice and well put. If we have not said it ourselves in so many words, we think that we have exemplified it in each issue of *THE POPULAR*. There are supposed to be two separate and distinct schools of fiction—the romantic and the realistic, but we think it a distinction without a difference. The realistic of to-day is the romantic of to-morrow. Some great writer sees the people about him and writes of them as they are and how they act. Modes of expression, the language itself changes from day to day, and for every real and original writer there are a host of imitators. These imitators copy, not the life and people they see about them, but what they find in the great books of a generation gone by. Their characters naturally seem to us artificial, their language stilted, their aims, ambitions, and ideals unreal and stagey. At the other extreme are the writers of "realistic" fiction. In their disgust at the hackneyed types and phrases, they forget that there is romance in every life and every generation, and give us realities indeed, but realities so sordid, so gloomy, and so inherently commonplace as to destroy for their readers much of the aspiration and joy of living. Their characters are, it is true, not impossible heroes, but too often fall short of being decent and passable men and women. Their conversation is not only bereft of the stilted rhetoric of other days, but also of that natural modicum of interest, charm, and

A CHAT WITH YOU *Continued.*

eloquence which is the birthright of so many of our acquaintances.



SMOLLETT was a realist a century and a half ago. Scott, in his own fashion and for his generation, was a realist. Thackeray was counted in his day an uncompromising cynic; now they criticize him for his romantic and sentimental tendencies. Dickens was a realist who wrote romance. In fact, all of the writers who have enjoyed a really great and lasting popularity have written both romance and realism in one. They have belonged to neither school, but to a third higher and nobler order of intellect, those who could see and picture living men and women as they actually are, with all their human faults, but who could also see in life the romance, idealism, and aspiration that are always there for those who know how to see it and feel it.



THE first of Van Loan's new series of baseball stories appears in the next issue of the magazine. It is called "Butterfly Boggs: Pitcher," and is one of the best stories of the big league Van Loan has ever written. Certainly Van Loan knows the professional baseball player as he is "under the skin," as well as the way he appears from the bleachers. In this story he describes "Butterfly Boggs" and his teammates as they are, mitigating no circumstance and indicating clearly certain human frailties as well as virtues. Some "romanticist" might have sought to tell the same tale and described a set of superhuman and lofty paladins like nothing in either earth or heaven, and duller than most things on earth. Some "realist," setting himself to the task, might have given us a picture of a group of low-browed in-

dividuals wielding heavy bats, tossing a ball from one to another, mouthing uncouth slang, and gloating sordidly over each other's misfortunes—not supermen, indeed, but something equally tiresome. Van Loan has done neither, but has given us characters human and healthy and lovable, with plenty of animal spirits and rough humor and philosophy.



ABOUT another sort of people, but with much the same point of view. Roy Norton has written in "The Cross of Gold," his new serial, which starts in the issue of *THE POPULAR* out on the stands two weeks from to-day. This is by far the best and biggest story Norton has ever written. It has all the quality of human interest that you found in the "Willow Creek" series and in "The Competents"—and something more besides. It is the story of a gold mine, and concerns those scenes and characters with which Norton is most familiar, and about which he writes best.



THE complete novel in the next issue of *THE POPULAR* is called "The Green Goods King," and is a really new sort of detective story. Craig Kennedy, the central figure, and of whom you will hear more in future issues of the magazine, is a man you will like and remember. He is a detective of a modern sort, a scientist, a thinker, cool, resourceful, imperturbable. Also in the same issue are stories by such writers as Peter B. Kyne, Robert V. Carr, Charles R. Barnes, W. B. M. Ferguson, and Frederic S. Isham. We would moreover like to remind you again that *THE POPULAR* now appears on the 7th and 23rd of each month instead of the 10th and 25th as formerly, and that if you want to be sure of *your* copy it is well to order in advance.





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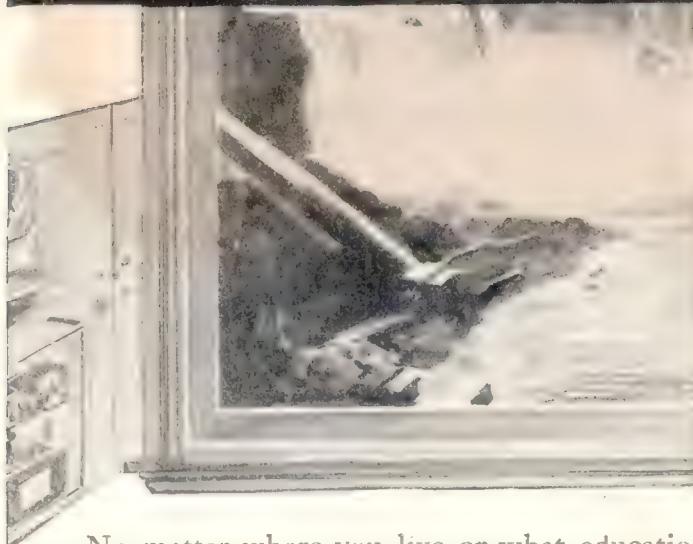


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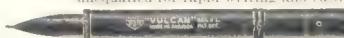
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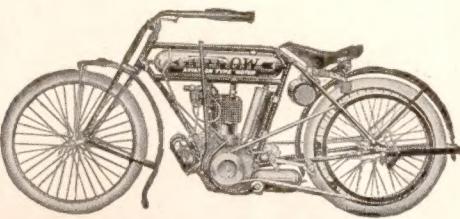
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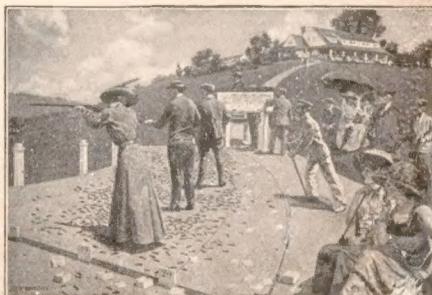
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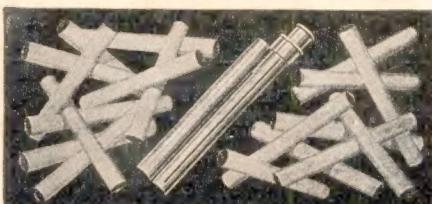
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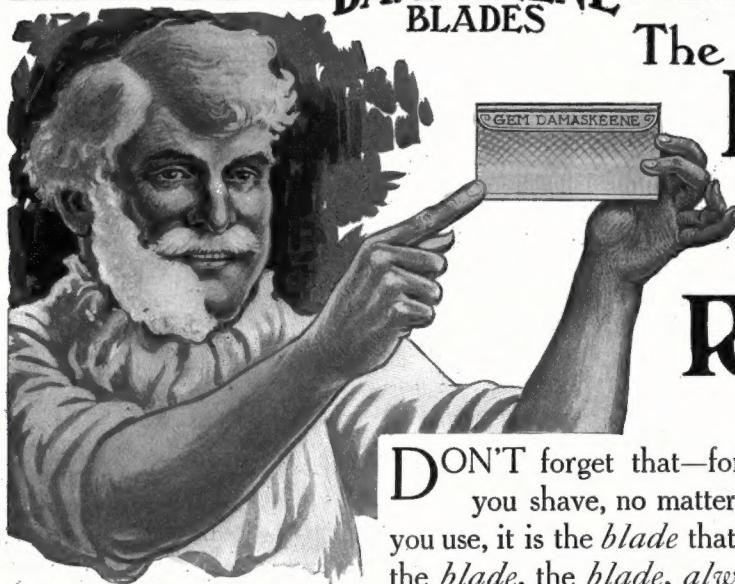
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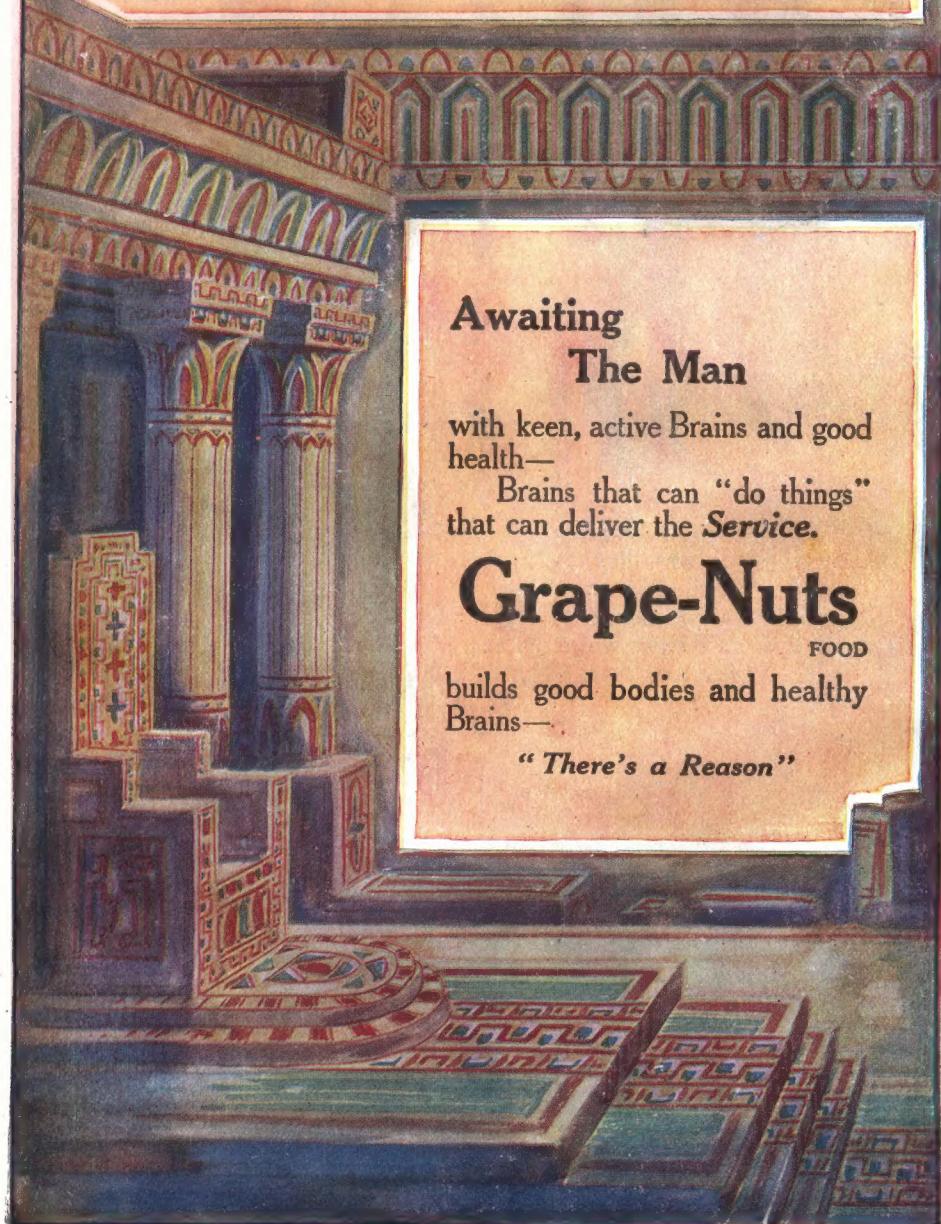
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